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ABSTRACT

The Suraksha monograph series contains eight volumes which discuss innovative early childhood care and education programs in India, especially those which address the intersecting needs of women, young children, and girls. Each report in this series presents a case study of one program, highlighting its achievements, philosophy and goals, organizational structure, costs or financing, and future plans. Volume 1, "Home Away from Home: Family Day Care in Bombay" (Vrinda Datta), describes a family child care service, including its structure and functioning, policy initiatives, and steps needed for the future. Volume 2, "In Sight--On Site: Day Care for Construction Workers' Children" (Margaret Khalakdina), describes an innovative on-site child care program, including community perceptions, financing, and advocacy and networking. Volume 3, "Little School on the Hill: Child Education in Community Development" (Vasudha Joshi), describes a program developed in Jaunpur. Volume 4, "For the Sake of the Children: NGO-Government Partnership in Child Care" (Kashyap Mankodi), documents the experience of a voluntary organization in the implementation of integrated child development services designed by the state. Volume 5, "Children of the Union: Creches for Women Tobacco Workers' Children" (Harshida Pandit), describes the Self Employed Women's Association (SEWA) and its establishment of a nursery. Volume 6, "Moving Up to School: Community Preschools for the Rural Poor" (S. J. P. Karikalan), describes an attempt to establish pre-primary schools in rural areas. Volume 7, "Another Kind of Child Care: Alternatives for Rural Women" (Rajalakshmi Sriram), describes an innovative program that is need-based, process-oriented, and participatory by nature. Volume 8, "Working Hand in Hand: NGO Government Partnership in Child Care" (Jyoti Sharma), describes an innovative partnership intended to seek support from NGOs to make the Integrated Child Development Services a community program. (DR)

SURAKSHA

Early Childhood Care and Education in India

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The SURAKSHA Series

HOME AWAY FROM HOME Family Day Care in Bombay	*Vrinda Datta*
IN SIGHT - ON SITE Day Care for Construction Workers' Children *Mobile Creches, Delhi*	*Margaret Khalakdina*
LITTLE SCHOOL ON THE HILL Child Education in Community Development *Society for Integrated Development of the Himalayas Mussoorie*	*Vasudha Joshi*
FOR THE SAKE OF THE CHILDREN NGO - Government Partnership in Child Care *Urmul Trust, Bajju, Rajasthan*	*Kashyap Mankodi*
CHILDREN OF THE UNION Creches for Women Tobacco Workers' Children *Self Employed Women's Association, Ahmedabad*	*Harshida Pandit*
MOVING UP TO SCHOOL Community Preschools for the Rural Poor *Palmyrah Workers' Development Society Martandam, Tamil Nadu*	*S.J.P. Karikalan*
ANOTHER KIND OF CHILD CARE Alternatives for Rural Women *Mahila Samakhya Gujarat*	*Rajalakshmi Sriram*
WORKING HAND IN HAND NGO Government Partnership in Child Care *Bal Niketan Sangh, Indore*	*Jyoti Sharma*

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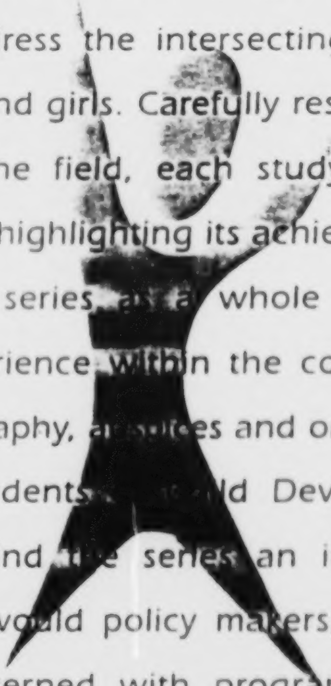

The SURAKSHA series documents innovative programmes of Early Childhood Care and Education in India, especially those which address the intersecting needs of women, young children and girls. Carefully researched and written by scholars in the field, each study looks in depth at one programme, highlighting its achievements, philosophy and goals. The series as a whole represents the rich diversity of experience within the country, with a range in terms of geography, auspices and organisational pattern. Scholars and students of Child Development and child welfare would find the series an invaluable source of information, as would policy makers, voluntary agencies and others concerned with programming for women's and children's development.

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Early Childhood Care and Education in India

HOME AWAY FROM HOME

Family Day Care In Bombay

Vrinda Dutta

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THE TEA GARDEN BABIES Creches for Women Plantation Workers' Children	***L.S. Saraswathi***

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SURAKSHA

Early Childhood Care and Education in India
Volume 1

HOME AWAY FROM HOME

Family Day Care in Bombay

by

Vrinda Datta

Monograph Series No. 1
M.S. Swaminathan Research Foundation
Madras

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The SURAKSHA series was initiated with the support of the Aga Khan Foundation (India).

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FOREWORD

Every human being ultimately is the product of interaction between the genotype (inherent genetic make up) and the environment. While heredity determines potential, the home, health and educational environment determine whether young children bloom or remain "blossoms in the dust". There is a well-known saying - *as the twig is bent, so the branch will grow*. It is in this context that Early Childhood Care and Education assume critical significance with reference to giving the child an enabling environment for the full expression of his/her innate potential for physical and mental development.

I am happy that through the SURAKSHA series of publications, a careful chronicling of the many excellent examples of Early Childhood Care and Education in India is being undertaken. This series will enable scholars and researchers as well as policy makers and practitioners to learn from the rich diversity of experience available within our country in this field. Such an understanding is fundamental to learning from successes and thereby helping to replicate effective and economically viable models of day care.

This series has been lovingly put together and is the result of close cooperation among the many people who have worked hard on it. On behalf of the Foundation, I must particularly thank the members of the Advisory Committee, who have given unsparingly of their time and effort, the distinguished scholars who have written the case studies, the agencies whose work has been documented and the Aga Khan Foundation (India) for their support.

M · S · Swaminathan

M.S. Swaminathan

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- the reviewers, who have been a tremendous source of strength in maintaining quality but have of necessity to remain anonymous

and

- the many others, all of whom it is not possible to list, for their constant support which made this series possible.

EDITOR'S NOTE

The SURAKSHA series has grown from an idea which has been germinating a long time. Scholars have long felt the need for documentation of Early Childhood Education Care and Education programmes in India. While there has been a wealth of experience in the country, with many small-scale experiments under the leadership of outstanding thinkers and educational leaders, it has been realised that hardly any of it has been recorded for a wider public.

The vast diversity in the situations of women and children in the country imply that child care services, especially day care, would vary widely in response to local and specific needs. At the same time, programmes for young children, by their very nature must be highly personalised, direct, small in scale, and rooted in local culture and relationships. Diversity and responsiveness to needs are hence an essential characteristic of successful programmes for young children. In the last two decades, with the rapid expansion of child care programmes like the Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) in the State sector, it has become all the more important to draw the attention of policy makers to the importance of the flexibility and responsiveness represented by these multiple approaches. Documentation has thus emerged as an essential tool for advocacy.

It was with the twin objectives of dissemination and advocacy that Project ACCESS embarked in 1993, with the support of the Aga Khan Foundation (India), on the project entitled **Multiple Approaches In ECCE In India**, with a view to bringing out a series of studies documenting innovative approaches to ECCE in India. Dr.T.S.Saraswati, Head, Department of Human Development and Family Studies, M.S. University of Baroda, who has for long been urging the need for such documentation, was an incomparable guide and adviser in launching the project. With the help of an Advisory Committee consisting of distinguished representatives from several disciplines, ranging from Child Development and Education to Management and Women's Studies, criteria were drawn up for

selection of programmes to be included in the series and procedures were developed for a participatory process of documentation.

The series of case-studies represents a wide range of experiences in terms of geography, auspices and structure. The locations range from the Himalayan region to the coastal South, from industrial metropolis to rural or tribal hamlets. The programmes are run by diverse institutions — voluntary agencies, trade unions, educational institutions and women's groups. The programmes include spontaneous private efforts as well as statutory obligations and government / non-government partnerships; they are employer-funded and union-sponsored, school-based or community based. The common element is a commitment to address the intersecting needs of women, young children and girls. In addition, each programme is need-based, client-oriented and responsive, a system of optimal size with a minimum life of three years, caters to lower socio-economic groups and is non-profit making in nature. The series title SURAKSHA was chosen for its rich resonance implying an all embracing, nurturant care, visually represented in the logo; while the colour of each cover is intended to evoke the specific geographical context

The process of developing the studies has been a participatory one, involving a researcher/writer working closely with the agency concerned, and providing opportunities for sharing and mutual learning among the agencies through a network and occasional meetings. The studies are process-oriented in nature and not merely descriptive, focussing both on the unique features and the replicable aspects of each programme, finances, sustainability, the child care worker, the organisational structure and relevant linkages. The concluding part in each case dwells on implications of the programme for wider policy initiatives for young children. An overview of the economics of child care is expected to follow the last study in the series.

Each study is unique and the present study, which is the first in the series to be published, is no exception. It is the only one in the series which concerns itself with a middle-class urban setting, and with activities which could be described as "profit-making". It is also the only one which is not about a programme run by an institution, but is a perceptive account of the large number of family day care centres which have spontaneously sprung up as a private response to the needs of urban working mothers in Bombay, similar to those in many large cities of India. Yet it has been included in the series, for good reason. Precisely because of the unplanned, spontaneous and uncoordinated nature of the response, the extent to which it meets needs, and the service to a distinctly identifiable community, it has many lessons to teach both scholars and policy makers. It could mark the beginning of a new trend in child care.

January 1995

Mina Swaminathan
Series Editor

HOME AWAY FROM HOME
FAMILY DAY CARE IN BOMBAY

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ABOUT THIS VOLUME

The Author

Dr. Vrinda Datta, Reader at the Tata Institute of Social Sciences, Bombay, whose doctoral thesis was on group care for children, has studied the Family Day Care system in detail. She has also contributed to its enhancement through training and networking.

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Naina Mogre

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1.THE NEED FOR CHILD CARE SERVICES

Urban working women and the need for child care services

During the decade 1981-91 the total number of female workers in India reached the figure of 9.1 crores, showing an annual growth rate of 2.39 per cent (Census 1991 and Saxena 1985). Of these, 1 crore are in urban areas. In Bombay alone, there are today 4.8 lakh main workers (women) with another 34, 443 marginal workers, taking the total of working women in Bombay to 5.1 lakh, as against 3.04 lakh in 1981.

The categories trade and commerce, transport and communication and other services have a large number of working women. As can be seen from Table 1, the employment of women in Bombay was mostly in non-agricultural occupations. According to the 32nd National Sample Survey, females comprised only fourteen per cent of the total skilled workers. The majority of skilled women in urban areas were employed in service or light manufacturing units. More than seventy-five per cent were in service-oriented occupations, particularly tailoring, typing and nursing (Nayyar and Sen 1987). This pattern may also broadly represent the current situation.

Table 1 **Distribution of working women in Bombay by occupational category (1981)**

Cultivation	400
Agricultural labour	483
Livestock/forestry	—
Mining/Quarrying	389
Household industry	9,405
Other than household industry	63,478
Construction	10,637
Trade & Commerce	48,297
Transport & Communication	15,258
Other services	1,56,472
Total	3,04,819

Source : Census 1981.

A factor which has facilitated the employment of women is the wide range of occupations caused by increasing diversity in contemporary production and the services sector. Thus, in spite of traditional notions restricting females working outside homes, a combination of forces and facilities in modern living promote female employment (Shariff and Swami 1981). The acceleration of middle class women in employment

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occurred because of the widening of the public sector. Employment in semi-government undertakings has also increased. Middle level educated women are generally employed as clerks, secretaries, telephone operators, receptionists, etc. while highly educated women work as college teachers, doctors and in management cadres. The banking industry has also been opening its doors to women, particularly after the late sixties and early seventies (Desai and Anantaraman 1982).

In his analysis, Reddy (1979) shows the relation of age and education to female work participation. There appear to be two educational thresholds. The first begins with matriculation and rises steeply with those with diploma of less than graduate standard. With further increase in the level of education, participation rates reach a trough in the case of ordinary graduates and again rise steeply with post-graduate professions and teaching. Reddy also points out that urban female participation rates show a trend similar to that obtaining in the developed countries. It increases between twenty-five and twenty-nine years, but drops between thirty and thirty-nine years, suggesting withdrawal of a part of the female work force on account of responsibility in childbearing and rearing.

Marriage and children may often cause constraints in continuation of work. Mukherjee (1975) found that marriage and children are determinants to middle class women's work participation. Gupta (1984) in his study found that the size of the household, the number of male workers in the household and the number of children below the age of five years were important determinants of women being in the labour force. At the same time it has been observed that the major reason for woman entering the job market is economic. (Kapur 1974, Ramananamma et al 1984, Ranade et al 1970). Many women, in spite of having young children and no family support for child care, are in the labour force. Urban living itself poses many problems for working women. The expansion of the cities into far-off suburbs has created vast distances between home and workplace. Young couples are compelled to make their home in the suburbs and, with no kin network, they

The expansion of the cities into far-off suburbs has created vast distances between home and workplace. Young couples are compelled to make their home in the suburbs and, with no kin network, they are dependent on services from the community to run the family. One of the grave problems facing these young couples is the care of their young children.

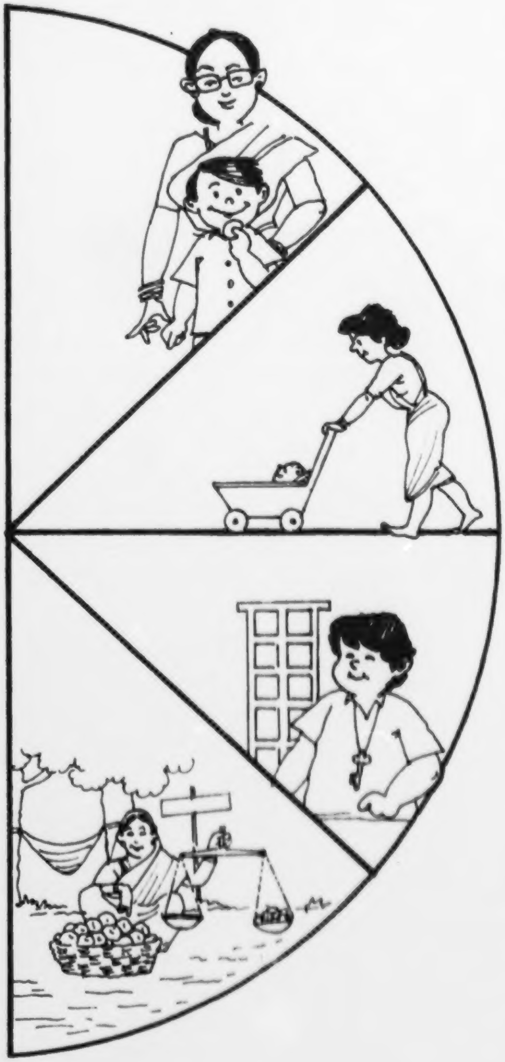

Fig 1: Types of informal care

are dependent on services from the community to run the family. One of the grave problems facing these young couples is the care of their young children. Whether it is educated working women, women in the unorganized sector or self-employed women, all of them face the problem of child care.

Types of Child Care Services

In the city of Bombay most child care services have developed out of the emerging urgent needs of working women. Fig 1 shows the various ways in which children are cared for. Basically child care can be divided into two kinds —in-home care and out-of-home care.

One of the most appreciated forms of child care is that given at home by a relative, generally a grandmother or an aunt. This arrangement is found to be most preferred and suitable because of natural ties, moulding the children into family traditions and convenience. The author's comparative study of various types of care has shown that children thrive better under relative care than under any other form of care. The grandmother is generally responsible for the care of the child and hence spends a lot of time interacting with the child, giving stimulation for optimal development. However, all working mothers are not lucky enough to have this support from the family.

Some mothers prefer to employ a maid who will take care of the child for the full day. Apart from being unreliable, very often these arrangements are full of problems. The cultural differences, the illiterate background and the unreliability of the maid make it difficult for the child to gain much from such an arrangement. However till more appropriate group care services develop, mothers are forced to employ maids for child care.

The women who cannot afford to pay for such exclusive care do not have many options. Many of the self-employed women, like vendors or domestic servants, carry their children to the work place. Children in these circumstances are exposed to environmental dangers like heat, dust and noise. There are other mothers who leave the child behind in the neighbourhood with no one particularly responsible for the child. The child may help himself to food and wander around, exposed to environmental and social dangers.The phenomenon of latchkey children is also found in educated families, especially older children who prefer to remain independent and not attend any day care, which may not meet their needs.

One of the common solutions for the development of out-of-home child care, is the day care setting. A day care centre is a group care setting where children are looked after by appointed staff. In Bombay, day care centres run by government and voluntary organisations are mainly for disadvantaged families. Many studies have indicated that the facilities and services are poor in terms of lack of trained personnel, materials and space (D'Souza 1979, Rane et al. 1986, Paranjpe et al. 1981). The creches under the Factories Act are found to be few in number and under-utilised because of difficulties of commuting with the child.Thus factory creches today serve very few children. There need to be amendments in the law, like allowing male employees to utilise the facility, and developing a new cadre of child development workers who would look into organising an appropriate programme for young children.

There are a few centres in urban cities like Bombay where employers not coming under the purview of the Factories Act, have taken the initiative and started day care centres for their employees' children. Many Mahila Mandals too have taken this responsibility of child care. The study by the author on day care centres has shown that basically they are child-minding centres with hardly any programme or activities for children. Apart from physical care, nothing much happens in these centres. In some centres materials are present but not used by children. Staff in these centres are generally not trained and therefore do not know what programme to have.

As the need for child care started increasing, family day care emerged as another form of child care. Earlier, the working mothers would make informal arrangements with neighbours for care of their children.

Slowly these arrangements became paid arrangements. Now the caregivers take care of not one child alone but a small group of children and so has emerged the phenomenon of family day care services in some areas of Bombay.

These child care services have been studied in detail by the author and the following chapters give an understanding of this type of service and the potential it has to grow into a developmentally appropriate child care programme.

There need to be amendments in the law, like allowing male employees to utilise the facility, and developing a new cadre of child development workers who would look into organising an appropriate programme for young children.

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2. THE STRUCTURE OF FAMILY DAY CARE

Family day care - what it is

Family day care includes any out-of home care in a family setting by an unrelated individual. In return for the care of the child, the caregiver is given financial reimbursement. Though much research has been done on the features and comparative advantages of family day care and day care centres as child care services, there have been no definite answers about which kind is better.

Compared to day care centres, family day care appears to have many good features. It is a form of child care that provides a mother-like person in a home-like setting. This environment is more likely to provide warmth and security compared to a day care centre where the child is one among many children with many adults to attend to him. Considering the child's needs, family day care provides some scope for a one-to-one relationship with an adult, which is vital for the child in the development of cognitive, language and social skills. The young child also benefits from a small and mixed-age group, which are both characteristic features of a family day care. From the mother's point of view, family day care is a convenient and flexible programme. The mother can make arrangements for care of all her children, arrange for convenient hours of care and allow flexibility to take care of emergencies. The mother also finds the location of family day care in her own residential area an added boon. This makes the child's adjustment easier. It also makes it possible to have a caregiver from a similar cultural and socio-economic background. Besides, it is convenient to drop and pick up the child on the way from work.

How it began in Bombay

The entrance of the middle class urban women into the job market could be clearly seen in the post-Independence period. The services and professions provided greater opportunities to women. In the seventies, the public sector openings especially in banking, created newer avenues of work for women. Thus it was accepted that women could work in economic crises. Families started depending on the women's income to maintain the standard of living and therefore women continued to be in employment through the childbearing and rearing years. The other aspect which forced women to be in employment during child bearing/rearing is that for those who left the job there would be fewer opportunities to get back into the job market, and besides part-time

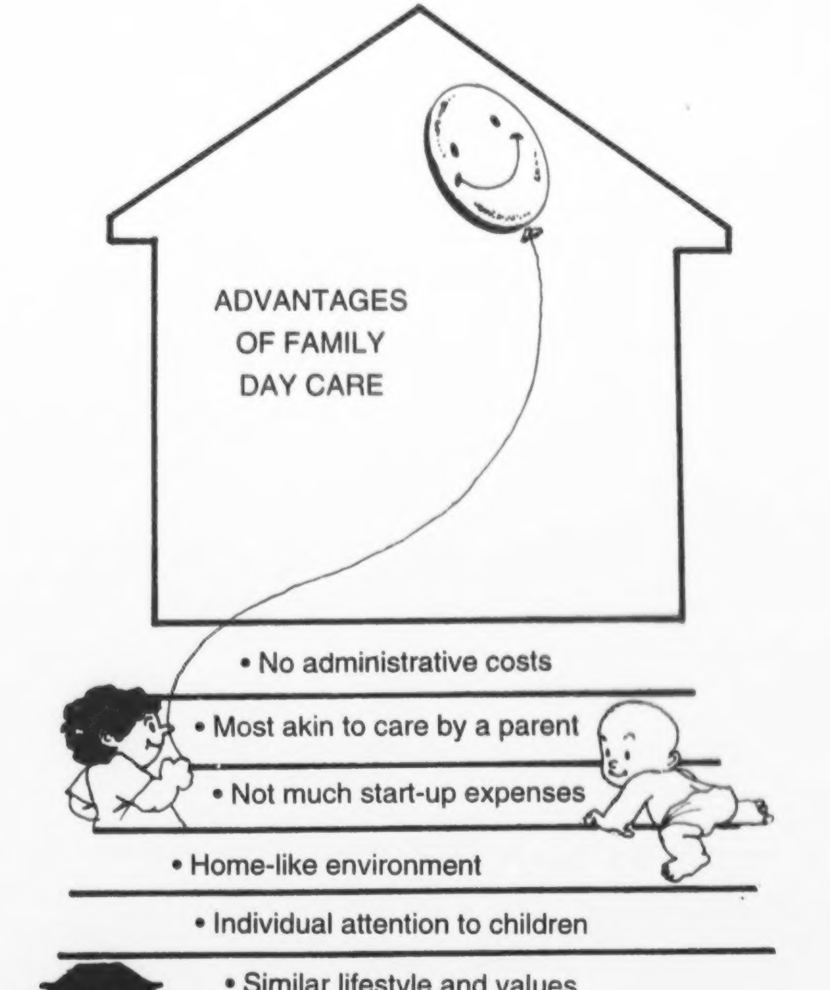
ADVANTAGES OF FAMILY DAY CARE
• No administrative costs
• Most akin to care by a parent
• Not much start-up expenses
• Home-like environment
• Individual attention to children
• Similar lifestyle and values
• Flexibility in arrangements
• Stable and continuous caregiver

Fig 2: Advantages of family day care

jobs hardly exist for the women who would choose it for the sake of children.

Around the same time, the family was in a state of transition. Industrialisation and urbanisation led to migration of young workers, in turn leading to nuclear families in the urban setting. The expansion of cities into far-off suburbs provided affordable housing to many young families. Thus with a nuclear family structure and working women, these families faced the problem of child care for their children.

Even today, the neighbourhood system is still very alive in cities like Bombay. If the family is not available, the next reliable person is the neighbour. Many working women started making informal arrangements with their neighbours for the care of their children. As confidence started building, of both the mother and the neighbour, the system started taking shape. More mothers approached the neighbour for child care service, and one woman started looking after three or four children, for which she was given remuneration. Inspite of the urgent need, there were no efforts by the government to develop child care services for middle class working women. So these women found family day care to be the only available child care service.

The expansion of family day care as a child care system took place in the late eighties. Although it is difficult to know the number of existing family day care homes,the concentration of such services is in the far off suburbs of Bombay, as affordable housing for young couples is only in the suburbs. These young couples with children find family day care services available in their very own localities. Sometimes caregivers are their own neighbours or at least in the same housing colony. In every building and in every housing colony there are likely to be family day care services. In the last decade there has been a tremendous increase in residential complexes in the New Bombay area. Again affordable housing has attracted many young couples. The local child care system has taken shape here too and most working women depend on family day care in their own vicinity.

> From the mother's point of view, family day care is a convenient and flexible programme. The mother can make arrangements for care of all her children, arrange for convenient hours of care and allow flexibility to take care of emergencies.The mother also finds the location of family day care in her own residential area an added boon.

Now it is nearly two decades since these services have emerged and proved to be an answer to the needs of working mothers and children. Professionals, academicians and policy makers have to take a serious look at these services and take steps towards recognising them and developing inputs to improve their quality.

Profile of family day care in Bombay

The data on family day care has mainly come from two surveys done in Bombay. The first survey was for a study on developmental differences among children in group care and in home care. One of the forms of group care studied here was family day care. The family day care homes were from the western and central suburbs of Bombay, forty of which were covered in the present study.

The other forms of care studied in this research were grandmother and maid care. A total of eighty children experiencing the various forms of care were studied for their social and emotional development. The mothers of these children were contacted at two points of time: the first time was to get background information about the family, and the second time was to collect information on the social and emotional development of the children.

The second survey was on 'group care as a context for child development'. This study looked at the differences in family day care and day care centres and also rated the child care for its quality. In this research 'snowball sampling' was used to get the sample of family day care which included far off suburbs of Bombay and the new area called New Bombay where lots of young migrant families find affordable housing and where the need for child care services is felt very strongly. A sample of sixty-six family day care homes were covered in this study. This study had information about eighty children and their families who were using family day care services.

Thus the present study drew upon the following :

Number of families	95
Number of children	95
Number of family day cares	66
Number of caregivers	66

The neighbourhood system is still very alive in cities like Bombay. If the family is not available, the next reliable person is the neighbour. Many working women started making informal arrangements with their neighbours for the care of their children. As confidence started building, the system started taking shape.

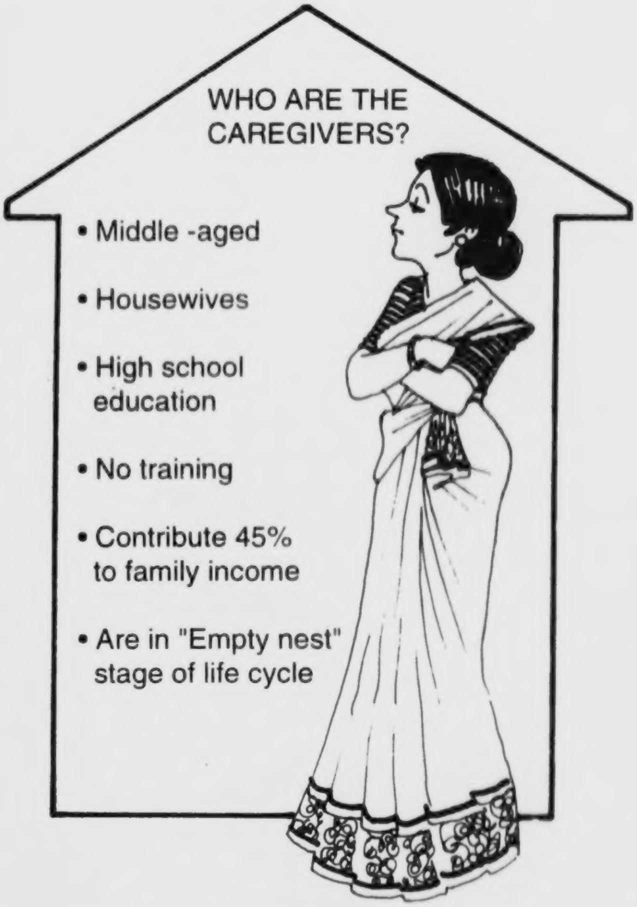
WHO ARE THE CAREGIVERS?
• Middle -aged
• Housewives
• High school education
• No training
• Contribute 45% to family income
• Are in "Empty nest" stage of life cycle

Fig 3: Who are the caregivers?

Who Are the Caregivers

Basically all family day care caregivers were housewives. Three groups of caregivers could be identified

- Women of about fifty whose youngest child was sixteen.
- Women of about forty whose youngest child was about twelve and
- Women of about thirty, either unmarried or with a young child about five or six years old.

The average age of the caregivers is 44.3. It is clear that most providers are in the later stage of the family life cycle where responsibilities regarding child care have lessened leaving much more time at hand. This finding is similar to that of the study by Emlem (1977). Emlem studied day care providers and found them to be generally in a later stage of family life than their clients and saw a complementary fit between the needs of young working mothers with small children and those of caregivers whose nest was partially or entirely empty of young children.

The British studies of child-minders (Jackson & Jackson, 1979) showed a similar trend. The educational level of the caregivers was very low. About twenty per cent were educated upto secondary level, and forty-two per cent were educated upto SSC. None had any kind of training. It appears that age and low educational level make it difficult for these housewives to find any other kind of employment. There may be many reasons for child care to be the chosen profession, but an important factor which attracts housewives to this profession is that it is homebased, requiring very little in terms of investment, from the caregiver's point of view. At the most, caregivers have to spend on toys and materials for children.

The caregiver also feels secure in the task of child care which is not very different from being a mother. The demand for child care is such that there is very little chance for it to become a failure and therefore it appears an attractive proposition. In running a child care service the caregiver is not answerable to anyone except the parent and therefore can run the service suiting her need and capabilities. Compared to any other job, profession or business, housewives find child care to be an appropriate enterprise. Welson (1982) identifies three factors linked with motivation for offering family day care : the need to earn a second income, the women's perception of the problems entailed in earning the same income as wage employees and a personal or ideological committment to remain at home.

At the macro level, family day care as a child care system may prove extremely profitable as it calls for no special space or staffing. It can expand rapidly with some inputs for training and materials.

Why they started

In the Bombay study, it was found that a large number of women started day care services to earn an income. The other reason given by caregivers was that day care is a much-needed facility for today's working mothers. At times mothers approached them to look after their children. Some women said that they were feeling lonely and wished to pass their time more meaningfully. Typically, the provider did not start with a business perspective. This finding is similar to that of Emlem (1977) who observed that the older caregiver with less education and marketability tends to prefer to stay at home and do that for which she is best prepared by practice, experience and inclination - the day-to-day routine of raising young children.

Emlem studied day care providers and found them to be generally in a later stage of family life than their clients and saw a complementary fit between the needs of young working mothers with small children and those of caregivers whose nest was partially or entirely empty of young children.

Comforting a distressed child

In the garden

Looking at family day care as a profession, some disadvantages can be seen. On an average, when caregivers have six children in care, they could earn about Rs.1,500 per month, making a substantial contribution to the family income. If the caregiver realises the ease with which she can increase her income, she may at first increase the number of children in her care, which would automatically increase her monthly income. The increase in the number of children may not make any difference to her if she believes in custodial care. But it will definitely be difficult to give quality care. The second problem is that a child care worker over the years will not be able to earn more or climb a career ladder. This could act as a disincentive to many in giving continuing quality care to the children.

Getting clients

How do parents get to know about the existence of family day care? Half of the caregivers explained that once the decision to start day care was taken, advertising about the service was taken up. Many caregivers prepared pamphlets and distributed them in the neighbourhood. Some even advertised in newspapers. A handful of caregivers went from house to house to inform people about the service. Many observed that after two or three children had joined, the mothers of these children informed other people in need of this service. It seems that at the beginning, publicity methods were used, and later parents themselves approached them. However, mothers who are new to the area, or others for whom the need has just emerged, have to start asking neighbours cr friends to help in the search for child care services in the area.

On an average, family day care services have been functioning for seven years. A few were just three years old, while there were some with thirteen years of experience. There is a distinct relationship between the number of years the family day care home has been functioning and the number of children in care. Family day care homes which were functioning for eleven to thirteen years had an average of thirteen children each while those which were functioning for three to five years had an average of eight children each. Parents would always prefer to send their children to a place which is well-established and has an experienced caregiver. However, a large number of children in a home may lead to poor quality care.

There were on an average nine children in each family day care home while two or three had twenty children each. Many caregivers did not cater to infants while three-fourths of them had toddlers and preschoolers. Most of them did not have any criteria for admission except age. Typically the family day care had one caregiver in charge with occasional help from an ayah or one of their own family members - a young daughter.

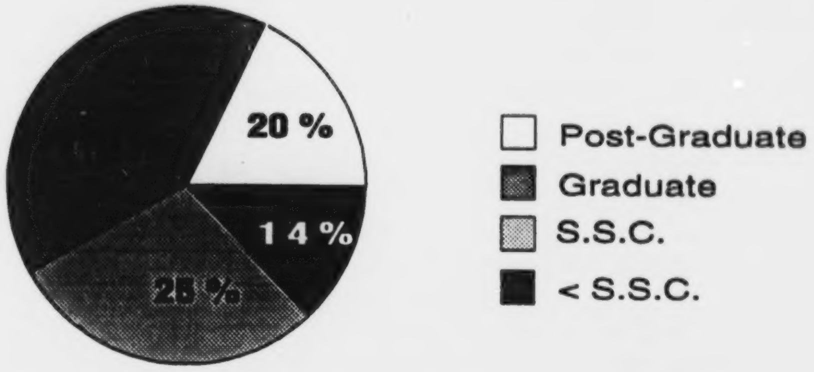

Fig. 4a : Fathers' education

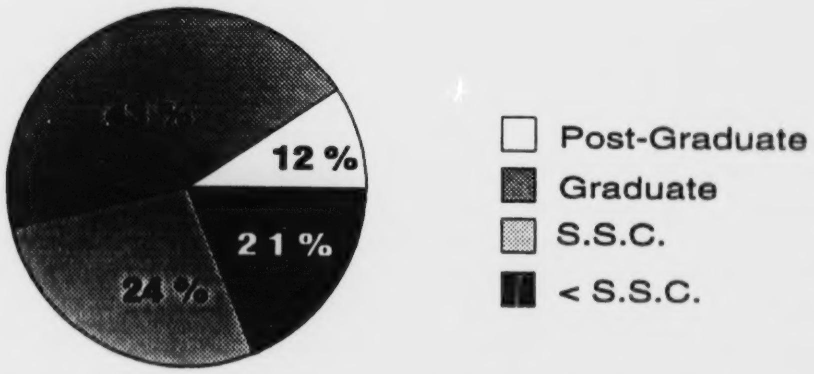

Fig. 4b : Mothers' education

Income through family day care

A lot of variations were observed in the amount charged for family day care services. Two main factors which determined the charges were the age of the child and the area in which the family day care home functioned. The fees ranged from as high as Rs.600 to a low of Rs.100 per month, the average being around Rs.250 per month. If the child was an infant, caregivers charged more because more effort and care is needed for this age-group. Another factor which influences the charges is the provision of food. Many caregivers give the option to parents. If parents require food to be served then they are charged extra.

On an average the caregiver earns at least Rs.2000/- per month. Some caregivers pay a salary to the ayah they appoint, while most others feel that their earnings need not be spent on expenses. The income from family day care constituted on average one-third (thirty five per cent) of the family income. Many caregivers reported that their income fluctuated as the income is affected by temporary withdrawal, illnesses or family vacation.

Profile of the clients (Parents)

Considering the families covered in the two surveys, data for about ninety-five families was available for analysis. Most families who used family day care services were nuclear families. A few families reported that even though the child's grandparents lived in the same house, the child attended a day care home as the grandparents did not feel competent to take up the responsibilities of child care. All the families were educated and had a good income, with both parents working. About half the families had two children. The majority of the families were Hindus, followed by Christians, then Muslims and other religions.

Looking at Fig. 4a, it can be seen that about twenty per cent of the fathers were post-graduates and some forty-one per cent were graduates: that is, nearly sixty per cent of the fathers were well-educated with many of them professionals like engineers, managers, etc. Of the remaining fathers some twenty-five per cent had been educated up to S.S.C. while another fourteen per cent had not completed the S.S.C.

On comparing the mothers' educational qualifications to that of the fathers'qualifications, (Fig. 4b) it appears that the mothers too were equally well-educated. In the sample, forty-three per cent were graduates, while some twelve per cent were post-graduates. Twenty-four per cent of the mothers had completed S.S.C. and some twenty-one per cent were educated upto less than the S.S.C. level. Thus the mother group was almost equally divided into a well-educated (graduate + post-graduate) group and a less educated (S.S.C. and less) group.

Table 2 A: **Mothers' occupation**

	No.	Percentage
1. Doctor	5	5.3
2. Business	5	5.3
3. Lawyer	2	2.1
4. Executive	4	4.3
5. Bank Officer	5	5.3
6. Teacher	15	15.7
7. Clerk	22	23.1
8. Secretary	9	9.4
9. Typist	7	7.3
10. Telephone Operator	5	5.3
11. Nurse	5	5.3
12. Packer	2	2.2
13. Punch Operator	5	5.3
14. Steward	1	1.0
15. Service	3	3.1
	95	100.0

Table 2 B: **Fathers' occupation**

	No.	percentage
1. Executive	12	12.7
2. Officer	5	5.3
3. Engineer	11	11.5
4. Teacher	2	2.2
5. Sales	8	8.4
6. Mill Worker	21	22.0
7. Clerk	15	15.7
8. Typist	4	4.3
9. Machine Operator	4	4.3
10. Lab Technician	5	6.3
11. Steno	7	7.3
12. Not available	1	—
	95	100.0

With this range of educational levels, the types of occupations of both mothers and fathers are quite varied. A very large number of women (twenty-three per cent) worked in clerical jobs, while sixteen per cent worked as teachers, with another twenty-one per cent in professions. Occupations like secretary (ten per cent), typist (seven per cent), telephone operator and nurse were some other common ones. (Table 2A).

The educated fathers were found to be executives (thirteen per cent), officers (five per cent), and engineers (twelve per cent). There was also a large number (sixteen per cent) in clerical posts. The not-so-educated fathers were found to be mill workers (twenty-one per cent), machine operators (three per cent) and technical assistants (six per cent) (Table 2B).

Since most parents were in full-time employment, they seemed to find very little time to spend with children. It was observed that in families who used family day care, mothers spent an average of about three hours daily with their children. The working mothers spent an average of six hours at work and another one and half hours for travel. Obviously, a mother who was away from home for eight to ten hours was bound to get very little time with her child. Particularly, mothers using family day care, spent more of their time in dropping and picking up the child and managing the housework as well .In this context, it is important to note that family day care must not only keep in mind the mother's needs but also satisfy the children's developmental needs. Since the family day care home is the place where the child spends more time than even at home there is urgent need to make this environment child-friendly and development-oriented.

Eligibility criteria

Every caregiver has a group of people in mind with whom she feels she can identify. When questioned on whether religion played a role in selection of children, most caregivers said that it was not an important factor. A related factor-language-was considered important by caregivers. Some caregivers were particular about taking only those children who spoke their language.

Most caregivers used age as criterion for admission and are reluctant to admit children below two years. A working mother who is looking for child care outside the home will obviously need child care when she is ready to resume her job after maternity leave. As there are so many caregivers who refuse to take the very young, the mothers of these children have few choices.The main reason for caregivers not undertaking care of the child below two is that the children are not toilet-trained and are also dependent on the bottle. This being so, they need more attention which the caregiver cannot give if she has a large number of children. Also with younger children, health care is a major issue.

The point to be raised here is the usefulness of an eligibility criterion in the smooth functioning of the system. To a certain extent, cultural compatibility is essential because children spend most of the day with the family of the caregiver. If the cultures are divergent, then the caregiver is going to be confused as to what is right for her to do. The lifestyle of the caregiver's family will also influence the child. It is seen that the caregiver's criteria are practical since they help her in smooth functioning. However, the mothers have to be definitely clear about their own criteria. One factor which all parents looked at when selecting family day care is convenience.

The location of the Family day care home, the timings and flexibility are the first and most important considerations. Next, for the child, they look for love, warmth and security. As a mother reported- *My son is so fond of* mai *that in the evening he is reluctant to leave her. She is very loving and he is happy with her.*

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3. THE FUNCTIONING OF FAMILY DAY CARE

Since the time spent in a family day care home forms a major part of the children's daily routine, the environment and activity there are of crucial importance for the child's mental,physical and emotional development.

Space

Many caregivers were living in flats while a few lived in chawls (tenements). Although no restriction was laid on space, with children being allowed to use the whole house, many caregivers did have space problems. At times, children were asked to sit quietly while the caregiver and her family went through various domestic chores. Running about and touching things which were not toys meant getting reprimanded.

Since most caregivers lived in flats or chawls, children's outdoor movements were very restricted. Children were indoors for six to eight hours a day, without much physical activity. Children were not even taken down within the building premises.

Except on Sundays, all through the week the children had no outdoor physical activity and play, which is developmentally inappropriate. While from the point of view of the caregiver, no infrastructure or special space is required, it is restrictive to the children and in the long run, may even be counter-productive.

Working hours

It was found that many mothers living in suburbs had to travel long distances to reach the workplace, and therefore had to leave the children very early in day care, before they started their journey to work. Caregivers received children as early as seven thirty a.m. Children could come at any time of the day, so some children came early and left early while others came late and left late. As a result of this, caregivers were found to have nearly ten to twelve working hours. This is indeed long and attending to children for so many hours is a tiring job. Many providers have to handle parent's requests for extra work. Parents arrive late to pick up their children, or leave them for weekend care which creates additional burden for caregivers.

Materials and equipment

Many caregivers were surprised at the question as to what materials and equipment they had bought for the children

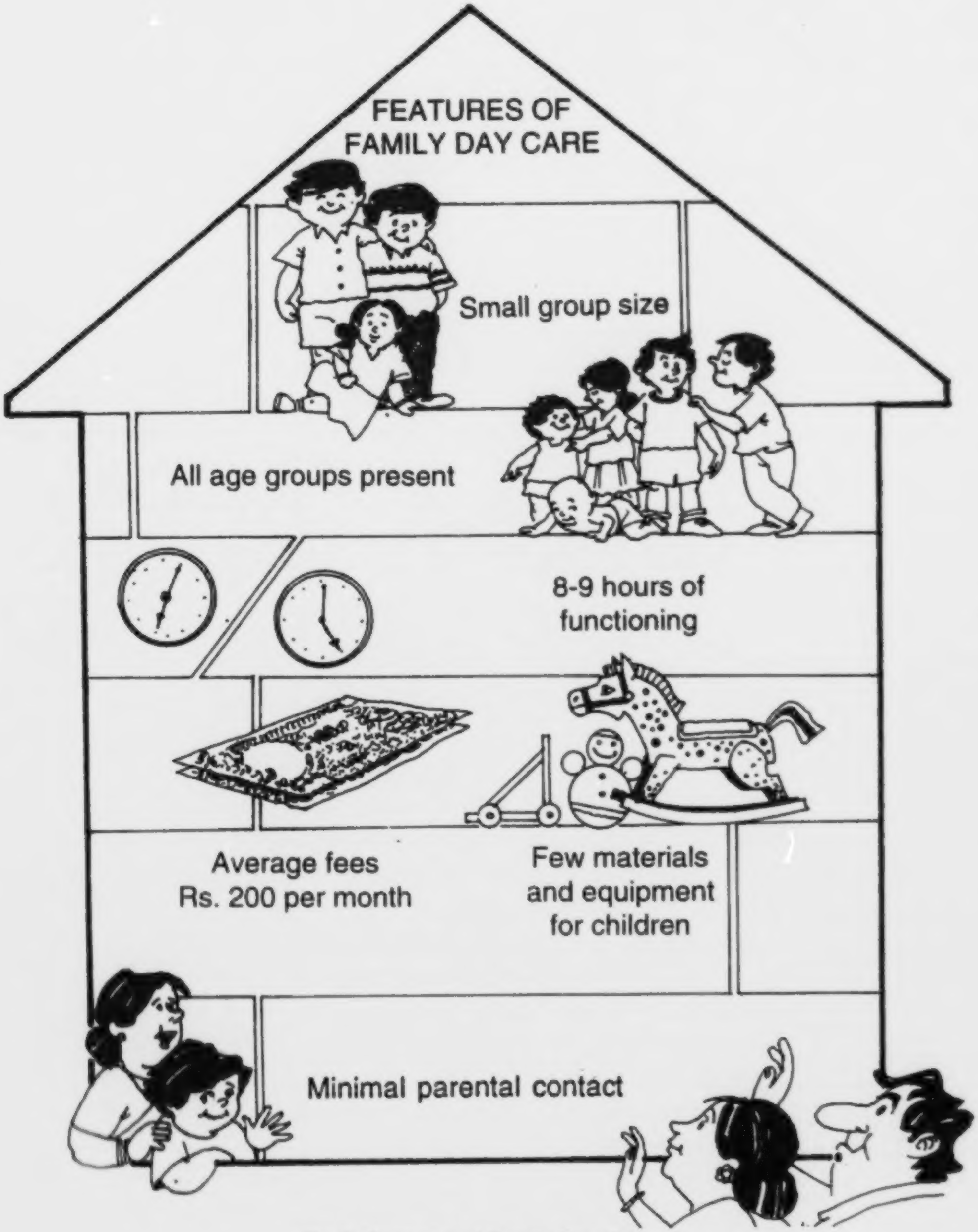
FEATURES OF
FAMILY DAY CARE
Small group size
All age groups present
8-9 hours of
functioning
Average fees
Rs. 200 per month
Few materials
and equipment
for children
Minimal parental contact

Fig 5: Features of Family Day Care

in their care. Most caregivers had spent no money to buy materials like toys even when they started the day care service. They merely kept a few household things for children to play with. Sadly, it was found that the caregivers did not spend anything from their earnings to buy things for the children. They did not consider it to be their responsibility. Some suggested that parents could send toys with the children, while others disagreed, as bringing toys from home was bound to create jealousy among children and when the toy broke parents would get upset. Still others felt no such materials were needed, as when children are together they do not need to play with toys.

The daily programme

As noted earlier, the neighbourhood family day care is extremely convenient for the busy working mother, but it is doubtful as to whether the children thus cared for are being provided with the mental and sensory stimulation so important for their growth and development. ***When children spend six to eight hours in family day care what they do throughout the day also becomes important.*** Where the number of children in care may be, for example, nine, all of them are not present at the same time. The caregiver spends a large amount of her time in getting children ready for school or when they are back, changing them, feeding them etc. She does not find time to spend with children in conducting activities. There is no set programme for the day. Therefore children sit idle or play on their own or get bored. The older children manage to play a little on their own, but toddlers and infants are grossly neglected in terms of some stimulation. The characteristics of family day care are described in Figure 5.Many parallels can be drawn between the home setting and the family day care setting. Since the caregiving takes place in the home of the caregiver, she has to monitor children's behaviour like the parents. The caregiver has to control children's movements as there are many objects which are unsuitable for play. Also, since there are several children, more restrictions are laid down by the caregiver. This becomes essential for the children's safety but at the same time it diminishes curiosity and the need for activity.

Basically children's activity could be with the caregiver or with the other children. Since the caregiver has to perform various tasks as a housewife she is not able to spend time directly with children. But at the same time the household tasks themselves give opportunities to involve children in doing something together. It was very rarely observed that the caregiver and children were working together on any household task. Mostly the children would be left on their own to do whatever they chose while the caregiver moved about doing her various duties. Shared tasks will provide ample learning opportunities for language and concept development.

One observation regarding family day care in Bombay was that some of the caregivers had young daughters who spent a lot of time with the children once they came home from school/college. The children enjoyed this attention and activity after periods of boredom and loneliness.

The event which brought some activity in the family day care setting was the daily movement of the school going children. The other children were especially involved in watching and helping these children get ready for school. Also when these school children are present they play games, sing songs and provide some stimulation to the very young children.

The amount of caregiver involvement depended very much on the composition of the group. When infants were present in a group, the caregiver paid less attention to the other children, leading to more peer interaction. Also when there were a large number of children, the caregiver tended to be very authoritative.

Since there was no play material available, the children found it difficult to keep themselves occupied. With the coming of satellite television there has been even less scope for caregivers to spend constructive quality time with children; rather, the children spend most of their time watching television along with the caregivers, creating lethargy and passivity all through the day.

On the whole, one can say that the environment of the family day care is casual, with no programmes for children to play, learn and do. Family day care can become an appropriate child care programme only when caregivers start investing some time and energy in being with children constructively.

Health

Food and health are important aspects of group care. Many caregivers took no responsibility in providing food for children. They felt that the children all came from different backgrounds and so it would be difficult to please everybody's palate. Besides, parents start demanding particular foods. Some caregivers gave snacks like biscuits, wafers etc. when needed. The caregivers who provided food, gave one standard food such as rice and dal every day. The young child requires variety, and eating only one type of food every day may give no opportunities to taste and develop a liking for a variety of food which is very important in the toddler and preschool period.

Regarding illness, the caregivers followed simple rules. A child suffering from any kind of infection was not allowed to attend the day care till he/she had completely recovered. Caregivers felt answerable to other parents and there was always the risk of the infection spreading to many more children.Often, a child suddenly develops some ailment or shows signs of sickness during the day. In such a situation, caregivers themselves administered some known household medicines, while others made it a point to call up the parents.

More than half the caregivers felt it necessary to discuss with parents the child's behaviour and activities, as otherwise parents would not know how their child was growing. As and when the need arose the parents gave instructions about illnesses. However, no regular meetings or discussions were held.

Quality of family day care

Over the past decade a considerable amount of research in day care has been conducted. A variety of investigations have explored a number of factors affecting quality. The welfare and development of the children must be the most important issue when considering quality. Therefore, what is offered to children in family day care in terms of environment, programme and personnel becomes very important.

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The quality of twenty-nine family day care homes was evaluated on a rating scale developed by the author (1992). (Appendix 1).

In this rating scale there were twenty items to be marked on a seven point rating scale. Descriptions for every item had been provided to help the observer to know where and how exactly the home should be rated. The twenty items were divided into four categories :

1) organisation (5),
2) personal care and routine (5),
3) furnishing materials /equipment (3)
4) activities with children (7)

Organisation

The rating scale showed that family day care had an average score of 3.2 on schedule. Basically there was no regular schedule. Maximum time was spent in routine tasks, with no fixed time for activities like games, songs etc. Since most of the caregivers had no training, the staff qualification item got a rating of 3.4 which showed that caregivers had experience but no training.

In terms of staff-child ratio the average rating was 4.0 which meant that on average the staff-child ratio was just

Meal time

A relaxed moment

appropriate. However, staff-child ratio should be seen in relation to age mix. If more infants are present, more adults are needed. The group size and age-mix in family day care got a score of 4 and above and 3.6 respectively. It seems that a group size of nine offers adequate supervision. But since there is an age-mix from infants to school going children it does interfere in smooth functioning.

Personal care and routine

In family day care, there were varied situations during meal time. The caregivers were always apprehensive about parents' reprimands and would very often force the child to eat, lest the mother questioned as to why the child had not eaten. In some cases, the caregiver was hassled between the household chores and caregiving, even though she had a small group. Very often, in spite of asking for food repeatedly, the children were kept waiting for their meals. In many places, self-help was not encouraged, but there were some where children had a pleasurable meal time with self-serving, group eating and constant attention of the caregiver. On an average, the meal time was satisfactory, the average score being 3.9.

Nap-time was rated as good in general. Most caregivers gave a separate room for sleeping and all of them did have routine naptimes for children. However, in some cases, children were not given beddings. They slept on thin sheets on the floor or slept across the beds. This made them uncomfortable as older children had their legs sticking out of the bed. Some caregivers forced children to sleep by threatening them.

Caregivers did take enough care to have hygienic practices in diapering/toileting. They were particular on cleaning the soiled place and attending to the child properly, and were not harsh while dealing with the children. The caregivers also gave adequate attention to the child in changing and freshening up and ensured that they looked clean always. They were quite regular in this activity. The caregiver's behaviour during the child's arrival and departure was warm and responsive, giving attention, keeping the child ready and at times conversing with the mother. The score was an average of 3.9 on this item.

Activity

In this area, family day care is truly far from satisfactory. Many homes had a space problem. There were no efforts made to make space available for children. There were times when children were asked to sit quietly on the bed till the caregiver and her family finished all their respective tasks, which may even exceed an hour at times. In some places children were constantly reprimanded if they ran about or touched things around the house which were not play items, especially when the adults were busy.

Materials

The low score of 3.2 in this category-showed that materials were totally inadequate. Since most homes did not have toys and materials, older children played verbal games.However, younger ones because of their lack of verbal skills and lack of materials did not play much. The only things that they got to play with were old boxes, broken toys or old kitchen items .

Development of children in family day care

There are very few Indian studies on development of children in child care and particularly in family day care. One of the studies done by the author (1993), showed that the type of care preschool children received, made a significant difference to the IQ scores of children. The IQ score as measured on Kamath-Binet test of intelligence was highest for grandmother care children (114.7), while the creche care group came second (111.6). The mother care group had a score of (108.1) and the maid care group was the last with a poor score of (105.9). The children in family day care benefited from mainly peer group interaction. Besides, because of the mixed age group the younger children learnt a lot from the older ones. This is also reflected in their verbal and performance score.

The social maturity of the same group of children was studied. The creche children had the same score as that of grandmother care (6.9), but the children of non-working mothers scored the highest (7.2). The reason for this could be that for learning social skills the child needs to be given many opportunities to practice. Due to lack of time and the feeling of guilt for not doing enough for the child, the working mothers may do most of the tasks for the child, while non-working mothers may be able to provide more time and opportunities for learning skills for self-help.

The second aspect in child care research which is gaining tremendous importance today is what happens in these child care places. The study by the author (1992) on quality of child care and implications for child development showed that children (toddlers) in family day care and particularly high quality care had more adult interaction than children in day care centres. The caregivers in family day care provided more socio-emotional stimulation, and the children benefited from small group size and a home-like environment. The study also showed that the children in family day care which was of poor quality, indulged in non-play activities or simply brooding.

Caregivers' role and perceptions

In an urban metropolis like Bombay, neighbourhood child care has become a very common phenomenon, for various reasons; the scarcity of other forms of child care, the pressures of urban living, and the traditional views on women's role which stops many a woman from entering the labour market. At the same time monetary needs make it necessary for some to take up income-generating activities which do not affect their wife-and-mother role. The value placed on home, love and security by most families makes family day care an attractive proposition.

The intense and diverse nature of work creates a demanding daily work schedule for the caregiver. The caregivers' work structure is determined by the parents' working hours. The caregiver finds that because the parents of children in her care have staggered working hours, she is doing child care beyond the six to eight hours laid down. Another aspect concerns holidays. The caregivers have found that when they need to take leave due to illness or other family committments, they cannot do so. Their leave, apart from the weekly day off, depends on the parents' leave pattern. This is one area in which caregivers have expressed great dissatisfaction.

Our social life has come to a standstill. I sometimes don't attend even marriages of close relatives which creates misunderstandings and loosens many of our family ties and friendships

- A caregiver

Another observed, - *Since she is our neighbour, we find it difficult to say no to her. Everyday she says she will come at 6 o'clock but never comes before 8 o'clock. I cannot go out or do anything for my family.*

Although, as earlier noted, factors like the age of the child and the area in which the family day care home is located do determine the charges to be fixed, payment is on the whole an area of discontent. Regular payments are not made nor is any additional payment made for any extra time the child is in care. Regarding charges, it was realised that the working women who make use of family day care services spend only eight per cent of their monthly income on child care service, whereas in developed countries they spend as much as thirty per cent of their income on child care. Even as there is an increase in the income of wage-work, there is no simultaneous increase in child care fees. This slow change in earnings makes caregivers view child care as piece work; i.e., in order to increase their earnings they increase the number of children in their care, thus reducing service quality.

It appears that caregivers do not view themselves as professionals doing a very serious and important task taking care of children. This also makes them view their role as an extension of their mothering role.

But still this is to be valued because love, security and a home environment are very important for a growing child.

Conclusion

Family day care caregivers take responsibility for all aspects of children's lives, be it discipline, toilet training or speaking the first word. Their deep involvement may not be there always but they have to be alert to children's needs. The mixed age group and the group size have a direct impact on the practices of caregivers. The household responsibilities create many tasks throughout the day which have to be completed by the caregiver. Added to this are the child care tasks which multiply with any increase in group size and variations in the age groups.

Thus, efforts for interaction, stimulation and play are neglected, and the caregiver concentrates only on physical care. It appears that caregivers do not view themselves as professionals doing a very serious and important task in taking care of children. This also makes them view their role just as an extension of their normal routine mothering role.

Considering the various inputs required to run a successful family day care service with a developmentally appropriate programme for the toddler and the schoolgoing child, it is evident that existing services, are satisfactory only in certain aspects. As noted in Chapter 1, family day care is a convenient arrangement for the mothers, and a convenient and dependable source of income for the not very highly educated, middle-aged housewife. They are informal and flexible arrangements but often the quality of care suffers through lack of education of the caregiver and her ignorance of the need for mental and physical stimulation for growing children, although mothers who value warmth and security highly, may feel that is what really matters.

Family day care is a convenient arrangement for the mothers, and a convenient and dependable source of income for the not very highly educated, middle-aged housewife. They are informal and flexible arrangements but often the quality of care suffers through lack of education of the caregiver and her ignorance of the need for mental and physical stimulation for growing children, although mothers who value warmth and security highly, may feel that is what really matters.

4. POLICY INITIATIVES

The Issues

There are many issues that need to be considered if family day care is to be an effective child care service. Some initiatives have to be taken at policy level so that there are better quality family day care services, which reach out to all groups of working women and develop child-oriented programmes. These initiatives will have to be taken at government, academic and community level.

The potential of family day care as an appropriate form of child care is tremendous. But research today reveals two important findings:

- it serves only a select group of working women, and
- lack of professional approach makes it a mere custodial care programme.

To overcome these lacunae, intervention is needed in the following areas:

a. Training
b. Standards for family day care
c. Information and referral system
d. Professional support through an Association and
e. Models of family day care.

Training

In large part, the quality of family day care will be determined by the child care provider. Although the most preferred care, as earlier noted, is that provided by a grand mother or aunt, it appears that good care is more likely to be provided by caregivers who have better educational background and training. A study by the author (1992) has shown that experience in raising children does not guarantee good quality child care but that ***education and training play an important role in delivering quality child care services. But ironically the low status of child care as a profession does not attract highly educated women. Besides, training facilities hardly exist, creating barriers for developing professionals in the field of child care.*** The serious need for training and for efforts to organise it at various levels has become imperative.

For this, it would be helpful to make a profile of the family day care providers. They are, first of all, mature adult learners. However, since they have been away from any formal learning for many years, the training therefore has to be such that it is non-threatening, especially in the academic sense.

The needs of caregivers for training will vary greatly as they come from very different backgrounds. The cultural, socio-economic and personal differences are important matters to be considered. The third issue is that caregivers suffer from professional isolation. They do not have any knowledge of what others are doing in terms of services. The fourth issue is that most caregivers do not visualise the need for training. They feel confident that since they are mothers, they know all that will be required of a caregiver and hence may not be motivated to attend a training programme. With these factors in mind it becomes essential that training is offered at various levels and that new and different training strategies are developed.

Levels of Training

- In-service training

This type of training programme will basically cater to training needs of providers already running family day care. The training is generally based on needs identified by researchers, experts and also sometimes as expressed by the providers. Generally, providers will express training needs in areas in which they are facing problems. Often the problems in the earlier stages centre around parent relations or on how they should develop certain skills. With experience, the focus on issues also changes. Irrespective of who identifies the issues, in-service training helps caregivers in the following ways:

- It develops knowledge and skills necessary for delivery of quality care
- It helps caregivers to develop consistency and continuity in caregiving
- The caregivers come together as professionals to learn from each other and strengthen the child care service.

In this context an in-service training conducted at Tata Institute of Social Sciences is worth mentioning (Appendix 2). In 1987, there was a three-day orientation programme for family day care workers to bring together all providers on a common platform to exchange their experiences, share their problems and develop an understanding of the knowledge and skills needed to run a child care programme. One of the important outcomes of this programme was that all participants were able to realise that they were professionals and that there was need to do much more than what they were doing in the interest of the child. They were given inputs for developing appropriate programmes and practical tips for guiding children's development.

- Pre-service training

As the need for child care is growing, there is also a need for expansion of family day care services. For this, pre-service training should be available so that women who would like to enter this profession, will have a proper insight as to what exactly they need to do. The attempt made by Bombay University to start a three months training for Early Childhood Care seems to be the first step in this direction. The course is offered to any one who has completed high school. It combines theory and practicals and prepares the student in child care and in understanding the whole profession. Attempts are being made to give inputs in the same course for both child care and early education. Today many colleges offer courses in Early Childhood Care and Education after twelfth standard. This sudden growth in courses should be viewed with caution as Early Childhood Care and Education is serious business and if not carefully handled, the quality of caregivers trained in such programmes will be questionable.

Standards for Family Day Care

The earlier discussion has shown that family day care in Bombay is the only paid child care which is readily available and which, to a certain extent, meets the needs of mothers and children. At the same time, because of no regulatory methods, the quality of care in family day care is very varied. In the interests of children, there is an urgent need to develop some measures to regulate the quality of care provided.

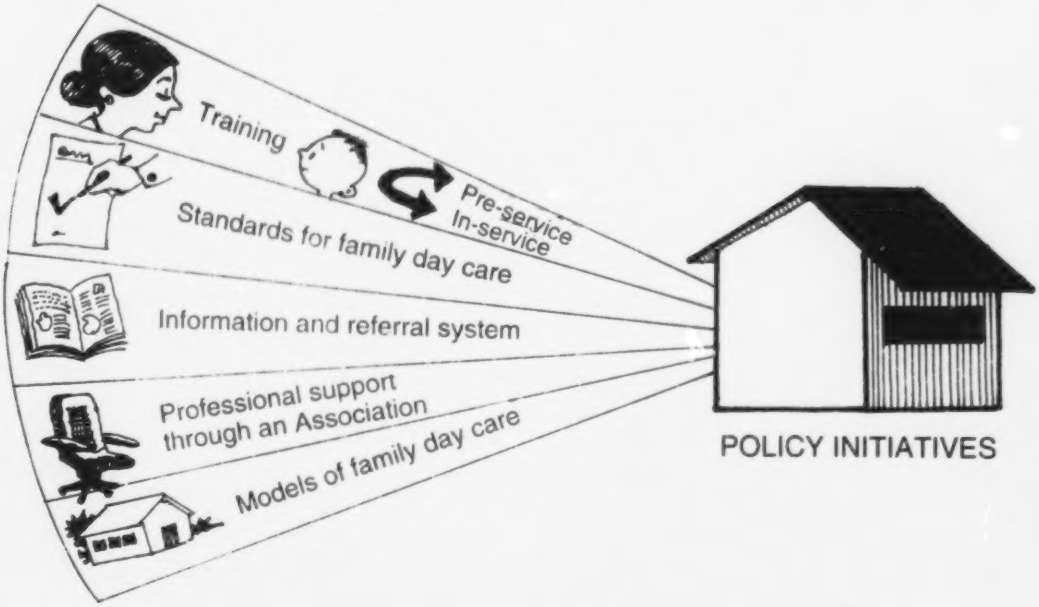
Training
Pre-service
In-service
Standards for family day care
Information and referral system
Professional support through an Association
Models of family day care
POLICY INITIATIVES

Fig 6: Policy Initiatives

]

There are many regulatory measures which have been operationalised in many of the developed countries. Gwen Morgan points out that licensing establishes a basic floor of quality and the ceiling is represented by the goals of the profession. Between the floor and ceiling are a number of regulatory and non - regulatory actions the state can take to enhance quality (e.g. staff credentials, supervision and monitoring).

The traditional approach for controlling quality in child care programmes has been licensing. It is considered a legal protection, where the minimum requirements for child health, safety and care are specified. The licensing requirements cannot be made unless providers are able to and are willing to meet them and parents are willing to support them. The licensing system to be implemented requires a large government machinery which would conduct inspections before issuing licenses and continue to inspect them to see there is maintenance of quality. In the context of family day care, this process becomes even more cumbersome. Family day care is spread in the city in all residential areas. Reaching out to them through inspections may prove a difficult task. Besides, providers may also fear and resent the intrusion of inspection into their home. As Morgan (1985) points out, house-keeping and child-rearing practices are part of the self-image of the home-based woman who may be afraid of being measured and possibly criticised on these matters. Licensing is a formal method and this formalised process may seem too complicated to caregivers.

Family day care needs a less rigid and less formal method of regulation. Class (1968) was among the first few who suggested that registration may be a more appropriate method of regulation for family day care. The registration office can be very localised, serving a particular zone or ward. The registration office would basically have information on the family day care homes that are registered. It would be able to give information on the number of registered homes, geographic locations and also details regarding their functioning. The staff in such offices would have to be qualified in fields of social work and child development. These registration offices could be located in community centres, ward offices or academic institutions. The registering body has to set up norms for family day care like safety measures, number of children taken and staff qualification. The caregiver while registering declares that she meets the set standards. In the registration system it is mandatory to follow the set requirements; also this system does not call for inspection. However, parental complaints or visits, if revealing unsatisfactory conditions, can lead to the family day care being deregistered.

The registration system as a regulatory method has great potential to succeed. Family day care is still a developing system in India. For the kind of programme it is - informal, localised and family based, it requires a regulatory method which is not threatening to its existence but a system which creates in the caregivers a sense of responsibility and the motivation to run quality programmes.

To begin with, there may be just recording of existing family day care services. Based on this, standards could be drawn up depending on what is existing and what can be achieved realistically in the given circumstances. Academic institutions and professional bodies like World Organisation for Pre-school Education (OMEP) and Indian Association for Pre-school Education (IAPE) should develop the system so that one maintains a balance between the informal and the professional.

Yet another system for developing quality family day care programme is the supervised family day care model, which is followed in Denmark, and is attractive for its simple but orderly functioning. This model is characterised by supervision by child development trainers who are responsible to a specific group of providers, children and parents. Supervisors recruit, select family day care providers, assist providers to meet regulatory requirements, provide initial orientation and provide in-service training and support on a regular basis. Thus inputs can be given through parents and caregivers creating an enriched environment for children. In addition, the supervisory system gives scope to control quality right from the initiation of the programme.

The regulatory system can work well only if parents also start demanding quality child care programmes. Thus parental and community expectations should be raised so that efforts to achieve quality care will have public support. The effort of educating the public must be made by academicians and child development professionals. Literature on developmentally appropriate practices and standards for child care should be prepared to reach the caregivers and parents, and mass media should be fully utilised.

Information and referral System

The informal nature of family day care makes it difficult to know of their existence and the services they offer.

The effort of educating the public must be made by academicians and child development professionals. Literature on developmentally appropriate practices and standards for child care should be prepared to reach the caregivers and parents, and mass media should be fully utilised.

Referral service is needed for parents, to inform them about the variety and quality of child care options. Such a consumer-oriented central information centre can help to raise the quality of programmes through educated parent choice and exchange of information among caregivers.

The resource and referral system will act as a clearing house within a defined community (city). This model helps in many ways, especially in the Indian setting where the day care system is not managed by a state or local organization. The resource and referral agency could provide information to parents by maintaining upto date information on names of available caregivers, their geographic areas, ages served, fees charged etc.

As the system develops it will be also possible to record complaints about caregivers to caution prospective parent users or even to start remedial work with such caregivers. The resource and referral centre could also undertake other roles to help and guide the caregiver.

Following the various studies undertaken by the author (1987, 1985) on child care, the first step which has been taken in the direction of resource and referral services is the development of a directory of child care services, both private and government aided, spread all over Bombay. The directory attempts to give information about caregivers, geographic location, fees charged, the conditions and criteria for admission.

The author also intends to have regular workshops and printed material to educate the parent groups in understanding the concept of good quality group care and helping them make appropriate choices so that the children's developmental needs are met. Today there is also a need to educate parents and caregivers about child abuse. Child abuse can take place in both home and group settings. The adults in a child's life must know how to recognise and deal with physical and emotional abuse.

Professional support by an association

The training programme conducted by the author showed that a continuous contact/dialogue/exchange was desired by the family day care caregivers. In response to this need the Family Day Care Association was formed in 1988. The Association aimed at:

- developing a support system
- taking up issues of pay and conditions of work
- sharing the care with parents
- curriculum and
- training.

The Association has conducted several workshops. A lively discussion on rules for day care functioning in one workshop, was followed by other workshops on making play materials for children, prevention of accidents and water play for children. Apart from these workshops, the Association also has a newsletter for its members which includes varied information - about developing a system of records activities for children, health related issues, day care around the world and parent relationships.

With more research work being done, more child care providers have been identified. Many have shown their willingness to be a part of this Association. Since the family day care providers have no other meeting ground, the Association becomes a strong base for coming together and solving the various problems and issues faced by them. As the other long term measures like registration may take time to come into effect, the Association will help in strengthening this form of child care.

The Association in the long run wishes to start a resource centre for caregivers which would offer a toy library, printed materials and guidance to all caregivers. The intention is to boost the morale of this group of workers and develop in them a professional expertise and knowledge so that the services offered become uniform in quality and of an acceptable standard.

Two new challenges

In recapitulating, it can be noted that family day care has come into existence because of current social changes. Educated women who started working but who had no family support for child care depended on informal arrangements with neighbours. Today this arrangement has become more formalised with the caregiver being paid for the child care she offers. Also, now the caregiver does not handle one child but at least six to eight children. Thus, family day care is an income-generating activity. Unfortunately no thought has been given either by caregivers or experts in the field, to develop family day care in a more professional way whereby both the mother and the child's needs are satisfied. Two issues which need to be addressed are:

- Using the family day care model to satisfy needs of various age-groups of children and
- Making family day care appropriate and available for mothers and children across all income groups and jobs.

The older child

Today schoolgoing children are a group which finds that there is no other alternative to being latchkey children. First, there are very few day care centres and most often they cater mainly to children from zero to six years. Second is the family day care, where most children go very reluctantly. The reason is that there is little that family day care offers to them other than a place that gives security and food. They miss playing with their friends as they reach home very late when mother comes from work. During their stay for two or three hours in family day care they spend some time on their school home-work but they have nothing interesting to do which helps in developing their hobbies or interests. Thus the growing years are being wasted and many talents and interests lost.

There could be many practical solutions for these issues. Some family day care should specialise in after and before school care. This could be taken up by housewives who do not wish to give many hours to the job. Hobby classes, arts, sports activities and games could be arranged for them. When children of one age-group come together they are bound to find many things to do collectively which is a good learning experience for them. This kind of age segregation can be done if caregivers in a locality come together and work out convenient age-groups to work with. This encourages exchange of client information and developing closer working relations. In the end, both mother and child may find family day care a more satisfying experience instead of being a chore.

Conceptually, this may seem to be contradictory in the light of earlier discussion that older children bring some activity into family day care by their movements to school and back; and the younger ones often help the older children in getting ready for school Why, one may ask, should one work towards a pattern of age segregation, when the core of most family day care is the mixed age group? Age-segregated activities have their own value for child development, but may, in fact, only be possible when the child care business reaches a high degree of professionalism.

The low-income mother

Today, because family day care is a paid arrangement it is considered to be suitable only to the educated middle-class who can buy the services. Child care services for the deprived and for women working in the unorganised sector are provided by voluntary organisations, sometimes with government aid. Compared to day care centres which require space, staff and equipment, family day care seems more lucrative. Voluntary organisations working in communities could identify women who do not go out for paid employment but take responsibility for care of four children each for which the voluntary organisation and the parent will pay. The organisation must take the responsibility to give inputs to the women to run the family day care with understanding and committment. Such family day care can provide women in poorer societies a sense of security as a known person would take care of the child. Caution should be taken to see that these do not turn out to be just child-minding places. Even though voluntary organisations may not take responsibility for child care, some guidelines should be there to prevent such care from becoming commercial types.

5. STEPS INTO THE FUTURE

Child care network

In the Indian context to develop any method to bring quality into family day care programmes is a very distant dream. Whether it is licensing or registration or any method to set standards, a lot of ground work has to be done for implementation and the implications in the long run, in terms of finances and personnel, are immense. However, the need for child care services is growing. Family day care is now becoming an accepted form of child care in urban cities. But as there are no expectations regarding its quality, the services offered range from sheer neglect to developmentally appropriate. Knowing that day care has enormous implications for the development of children , efforts will have to be made at community level to enhance the quality of family day care programmes. Agencies concerned with establishing high-quality child care must take the responsibility of developing a network in their community.

The objective of networking should be to bring caregivers out of virtual isolation, to share ideas and experiences with each other, to develop knowledge and skills through workshops, discussions and to develop resource centres where caregivers would come and talk with staff members and collect materials through the lending library.

The agency that undertakes the responsibility for networking should have a clear understanding about quality programmes. The objective of networking should be to bring caregivers out of virtual isolation, to get them to share ideas and experiences with each other, to develop knowledge and skills through workshops, discussions and to develop resource centres where caregivers would come and talk with staff members and collect materials through the lending library.

Networking must be the responsibility of a person from the field of child development. The role is to provide leadership in the development of the programmes, act as a liaison between the caregivers and other experts and be a guiding force to all members. The first step in networking is to initiate interaction among caregivers. This gives scope to discuss many common problems like how to relate to parents, how to manage time etc. Along with this, monthly workshops could also be planned. Workshop subjects could cover a wide range of topics related to child development or administration of the programme. Since caregivers are not used to academic learning they would benefit more by experiential learning. Such an educational programme could also have field trips as part of the programme.

Networking leads to self-help. Since to be a part of networking is voluntary, only agencies and individuals who are interested in improving their skills will become members. Second, networking, through its inputs to members enhances the quality of child care. Thus two categories will emerge:

- Networking members providing better quality child care services and
- Non-networking members providing poor quality child care.

At this point of time if parents are educated and guided to select good quality family day care, there will be more demand for quality child care making it difficult for poor quality child care to survive. Thus networking could be a very strong agent in developing quality programmes. If the community, caregivers and parents are fully aware of the networking organisation,the sequential steps in developing quality programmes can be taken up.

When every locality develops a networking organisation, this could be termed as a networking system. The networking systems would include all the networking organisations and their members. Through these systems could be developed the registration of child care services. The registration of networking members could be done by making it mandatory for every family day care to follow certain norms for it to be registered. However, some responsibilities lie with the networking organisation - to supervise and visit the family day care homes and to see that they are maintaining the standard.

Another important aspect is encouraging parents to report about their experiences. This helps the networking organisation to evaluate family day care and even consider deregistering those who do not meet the standards. For such a system to really function, the networking systems should be accepted by the community as organisations which can be trusted to solve issues regarding family day care. A lot of time will have to be given to caregivers, parents and community to develop this trust.Since a local organisation like a school/ academic institution or a voluntary organisation will be taking this role, there will hopefully be less apprehension in accepting the networking organisations which would ensure quality care.

National efforts for advocacy

Though child care is now being recognised as an important service, few efforts have been made in expanding these services to reach working women and children in all sections of society. Today with nine crore women workers, the need for child care services is even greater. The creche scheme of the Central Social Welfare Board (CSWB) caters to a mere 2.5 lakh children, while statutory creches cater to just 50,000.

Some efforts for child care have been made by voluntary organisations and individuals. In urban cities like Bombay, Mahila Mandals and individuals have taken up this much needed task of child care services. However, their numbers are not known. They have been mushrooming as the need is growing, but these efforts are grossly inadequate.

The second issue regarding child care in India has been the virtual absence of varieties in child care programmes suited to local needs of working women and children. Except for day care centres, government's efforts to recognise other forms of child care are absent, resulting in standard stereotyped programmes which at times fail to reach the working mother and child. Family day care does not yet have the recognition it deserves.

The third issue of concern is the quality of child care in India. With no legal measures or monitoring, child care is anyone's job with freedom to do anything. Child care seems to show no concern for children's needs. With lack of space, materials, trained staff and programmes, the quality of child care is very poor.

Considering these issues women's organisations, concerned individuals and voluntary organisations committed to child care, have come together to form the Forum for Creche and Child Care Services. (FORCES), which campaigns for:

a. Expansion, upgradation and strengthening of all existing programmes at the field implementation level to meet the demands of developmental day care
b. Creating public awareness and motivation
c. Developing decentralised structures at the grassroots
d. Developing necessary training and support structures and
e. Promoting flexible innovative approaches.

Such activities by this forum and other committed groups will go a long way not only in putting child care on the national agenda, but also in providing good quality day care to young children of working parents.

Appendix I

FAMILY DAY CARE SCORING SHEET

Name and address of family day care homes :

I. Organisation

1. Schedule	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
2. Staff	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
3. Adult-child ratio	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
4. Group size	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
5. Age mix	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Total organisation score:

II. Personal care and routine

6. Nap and rest	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
7. Eating	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8. Arrival/Departure	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
9. Personal grooming	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
10. Toileting/Diapering	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Total personal care
routine score:

III. Material/Equipment

11. Routine care	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
12. Learning activities	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
13. Child safety	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Total Materials/
Equipment score:

IV. Child activities

14. Language activities	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
15. Learning concepts	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
16. Motor activities	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
17. Creative activities	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
18. Adult interaction	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
19. Peer interaction	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Total child
activities score

Total Quality Score

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Appendix 2:

THE ORIENTATION TRAINING PROGRAMME FOR WORKERS OF PRIVATE CRECHES IN GREATER BOMBAY

March 6-8, 1987

Objectives

The objectives of the training were:

1. To give the caregivers a basic understanding of the needs of children.

2. To give the caregivers information on the planning and management of a day care programme.

3. To help the caregivers develop skills needed to work with children.

Participation

The two research studies conducted in the Institute (Tata Institute of Social Sciences) had identified some sixty creches run by housewives in their own homes. In order that the participants would feel free to express themselves the training programme had to be conducted in a regional language. As the number of Marathi speaking housewives was high, it was decided that this first training programmme would be conducted in Marathi in order to make it more effective.Twenty-two housewives participated in this training programme, even though it meant leaving their homes for three days.

Literature

The relevant English material was identified and translated into Marathi. The literature was on various topics of significance to the caregivers. Some of the topics covered were children's physical, social, emotional and intellectual development, the uniqueness of each child; how to enhance the child's development, health and nutritional needs of children; rhymes and poems for children.

Exhibition

An exhibition on Child Care was planned. For this, Mobile Creches, UNICEF and the Parenting Centre generously lent charts posters, toys and games for display. Besides, during the course on supervision of Early Childhood Programmes, the students of TISS had prepared low-cost materials for children which were also displayed. A slide-show on activities for children was arranged.

Suggestions for improvement

1. More interaction between caregivers is essential. At least caregivers of particular areas must come together and work out

Training Sessions

Session	Area covered
I. Information	1. Problems of working mothers
	2. Concept of day care
	3. Day care in India
II. Organisation	1. How to run a day care
III. Understanding child development	1. Child Nutrition
	2. Child Health
	3. Social and emotional needs of children and role of caregiver
	4. Parent-caregiver relationship
IV. Developing skills to work with children	1. How to communicate with children
	2. Play materials for learning and amusement for children
V. Open forum	

better ways of functioning so that they provide quality services and care to all age groups. One suggestion was that each caregiver could take up a particular age group so that managing the group of children becomes easier.

2. It was felt that all family day care homes should have fixed hours of working, and any child being looked after beyond those hours, should be charged extra per hour. If parents wish to have the child occasionally sleep over at the day care homes, the caregiver

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must be acquainted with the parents and then only accept. She must decide on how to charge for such cases. All caregivers must make it clear to parents that even when the child does not attend the day care for a month, they will be charged.

3. All caregivers agreed that the age of the child, the number of hours in day care and the income of parents should help a caregiver judge how much should be charged.

4. Regarding holidays, all caregivers agreed on the practice of having bank holidays and Sundays as holidays. They also felt some vacation was necessary. Many agreed to a one-month break while some preferred a fortnight's break twice in a year.

5. It was suggested by many speakers that a day care home must follow certain norms. The caregivers must evolve a detailed form which gives details of the child, family and parental stand regarding certain crucial issues. The rules and regulations of the day care home should also be made clear to the parents in writing.

6. Regarding food provision, it was felt that both parents and caregivers should provide for food. Many caregivers said they preferred parents sending lunch with the child and that they would prepare only hot snacks.

7.The caregivers agreed that health could be one area of major conflict. Also, since the child spends a longer time with them, they can be in a position to forewarn parents of any illness. They also realised that keeping growth charts and immunisation records are important. The caregivers were advised to have a visiting doctor once in three months at least, and also take it in writing from parents to allow the caregiver's physician to treat their child in an emergency. A suggestion offered to parents on not sending their children with infectious diseases was that caregivers must insist on a medical certificate This will help caregivers to convince other parents .

8. One of the participants suggested that a course on nursing and first aid would help the caregivers a lot. This caregiver herself being a nurse, was willing to guide the other caregivers for a twelve Sundays course on nursing. About ten caregivers (participants) were willing to take the course.

9. Talking of the basic equipment for a day care home, basic kitchen items must be available, but the milk cups should be separate.Regarding equipment for play activities, the caregivers were told to give more attention to this and make it a point to provide for the needs of children age-wise.

10. The speakers suggested that there should be a good relationship between parents and caregivers. Parents must contribute to the day care; for eg, if any parent is a doctor, she/he can offer their services. They can contribute by making teaching aids.

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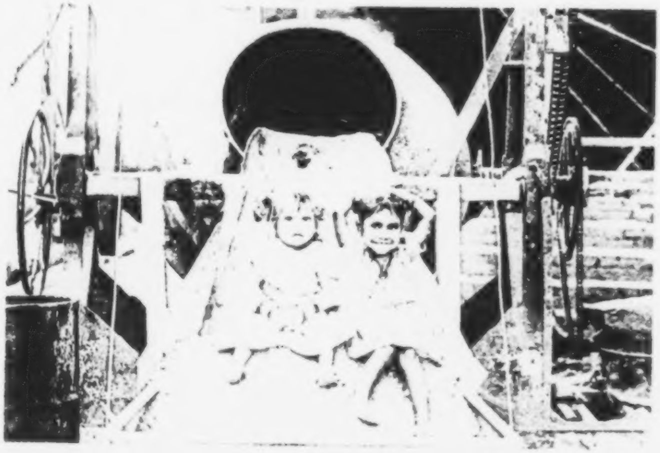

Day Care for Construction Workers' Children

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Mobile Creches, Delhi

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by

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- the many others, all of whom it is not possible to list, for their constant support.which made this series possible.

FOREWORD

Every human being ultimately is the product of interaction between the genotype (inherent genetic make up) and the environment. While heredity determines potential, the home, health and educational environment determine whether young children bloom or remain "blossoms in the dust". There is a well-known saying - *as the twig is bent, so the branch will grow.* It is in this context that Early Childhood Care and Education assume critical significance with reference to giving the child an enabling environment for the full expression of his/her innate potential for physical and mental development.

I am happy that through the SURAKSHA series of publications, a careful chronicling of the many excellent examples of Early Childhood Care and Education in India is being undertaken. This series will enable scholars and researchers as well as policy makers and practitioners to learn from the rich diversity of experience available within our country in this field. Such an understanding is fundamental to learning from successes and thereby helping to replicate effective and economically viable models of day care.

This series has been lovingly put together and is the result of close cooperation among the many people who have worked hard on it. On behalf of the Foundation, I must particularly thank the members of the Advisory Committee, who have given unsparingly of their time and effort, the distinguished scholars who have written the case studies, the agencies whose work has been documented and the Aga Khan Foundation (India) for their support.

M · S · Swaminathan

M.S. Swaminathan

EDITOR'S NOTE

The SURAKSHA series has grown from an idea which has been germinating for a long time. Scholars have long felt the need for documentation of Early Childhood Education Care and Education programmes in India. While there has been a wealth of experience in the country, with many small-scale experiments under the leadership of outstanding thinkers and educational leaders, it has been realised that hardly any of it has been recorded for a wider public.

The vast diversity in the situations of women and children in the country implies that child care services, especially day care, would vary widely in response to local and specific needs. At the same time, programmes for young children, by their very nature must be highly personalised, direct, small in scale, and rooted in local culture and relationships. Diversity and responsiveness to needs are hence an essential characteristic of successful programmes for young children. In the last two decades, with the rapid expansion of child care programmes like the Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) in the State sector, it has become all the more important to draw the attention of policy makers to the importance of the flexibility and responsiveness represented by these multiple approaches. Documentation has thus emerged as an essential tool for advocacy.

It was with the twin objectives of dissemination and advocacy that Project ACCESS embarked in 1993, with the support of the Aga Khan Foundation (India), on the project entitled **Multiple Approaches in ECCE in India**, with a view to bringing out a series of studies documenting innovative approaches to ECCE in India. Dr.T.S.Saraswati, Head, Department of Human Development and Family Studies, M.S. University of Baroda, who has for long been urging the need for such documentation, was an incomparable guide and adviser in launching the project. With the help of an Advisory Committee consisting of distinguished representatives from several disciplines, ranging from Child Development and Education to Management and Women's Studies, criteria were drawn up for

selection of programmes to be included in the series and procedures were developed for a participatory process of documentation.

The series of case-studies represents a wide range of experiences in terms of geography, auspices and structure. The locations range from the Himalayan region to the coastal South, from industrial metropolis to rural or tribal hamlets. The programmes are run by diverse institutions — voluntary agencies, trade unions, educational institutions and women's groups. The programmes include spontaneous private efforts as well as statutory obligations and government / non-government partnerships; they are employer-funded and union-sponsored, school-based or community based. The common element is a commitment to address the intersecting needs of women, young children and girls. In addition, each programme is need-based, client-oriented and responsive, a system of optimal size with a minimum life of three years, caters to lower socio-economic groups and is non-profit making in nature. The series title SURAKSHA was chosen for its rich resonance implying an all embracing, nurturant care, visually represented in the logo; while the colour of the cover is intended to evoke the specific geographical context.

The process of developing the studies has been a participatory one, involving a researcher/writer working closely with the agency concerned, and providing opportunities for sharing and mutual learning am[illegible]he agencies through a network and occasional meetings. The studies are process-oriented in nature and not merely descriptive, focussing both on the unique features and the replicable aspects of each programme, finances, sustainability, the child care worker, the organisational structure and relevant linkages. The concluding part in each case dwells on implications of the programme for wider policy initiatives for young children. An overview of the economics of child care is expected to follow the last study in the series.

This study, the second in the series, focusses on the pioneering first attempt in this country to develop day care for a segment of society that had remained invisible till then – the children of migrant rural labourers living on construction sites in large cities. Twenty five years old already, the programme remains small, confined only to a handlful of centres in three cities; yet it has had a profound influence, out of all proportion to its size, on programming, funding and training and on the concept of day-care itself.

This study confines itself to Delhi, where Mobile Creches was born, but refers where relevant to the work in Bombay and Pune. The programme is run along similar lines in all three cities -- the differences arise mainly from the nature of the population served. In Delhi, there has been a significant extension to slums and resettlements, while in Bombay and Pune the emphasis is still on construction sites. This affects many aspects of the programme -- the pattern of attendance, the staff-child ratio, the size of the centres, the daily schedule, the training, the kind of funding and ultimately the costs. These differences, which are commented upon in parts of the text, give some indication of the enormous pressures and problems of working for a mobile population.

The study examines all aspects of the programme in depth, exploring the components of quality. As the story unfolds, one can begin to see the links between cost, quality and replication, and to appreciate that "low cost" in material terms can achieve little without " high cost" in human terms, though the latter may often be undervalued. It is one more reminder that there are no simple answers to the complex questions of human development.

February 1995

Mina Swaminathan
Series Editor

IN SIGHT - ON SITE

DAY CARE FOR CONSTRUCTION WORKERS' CHILDREN

* * *

ABOUT THIS VOLUME

The Author

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1 BEGINNINGS AND CHANGES

Mobile Creches is the outcome of the vision of a group of enlightened women who ardently desired that those children who spend their early years amid rubble and stone should also have the basics of a joyous childhood and loving care.

Who were these children?

From the hinterlands of Delhi and from far off villages in Madhya Pradesh, Bihar and Orissa, children straggled along with their migrant families who came in search of casual labour. Rural men and women, hoping to eke out a meagre existence, with no skills, no education and no notion of what city life would be like, took their children with them as they moved from place to place. Contracted to work on building sites for the city rich, they came with hardly any belongings, clutching their undernourished, unkempt little children. While they laboured, in the scorching sun, merciless rain, and the biting cold of Delhi, the children idled around, scantily sheltered from the sun and cold.

Who were these women?

They watched with concern the babies precariously hammocked under a little shade, with older ones playing in dangerous conditions of rising brick and steel. In retrospect, recalling how their work began, they all said:

It was Meera, of course... Meera Mahadevan... her motivation and enthusiasm were difficult to resist. She was so single-minded in her dedication. These children are ours, she used to say... we have an obligation to help make their lives better, while their mothers toil for almost eight hours every day... anxious about the well-being of their little ones, snatching a few minutes to breastfeed babies, to admonish older ones, taking care of younger ones, ... often girls of six and seven, deprived of a carefree and happy childhood.

Meera Mahadevan was indeed an inspiring leader, giving the movement a zest that far exceeded its resources.

Meera.. in the year 1969, was the Secretary of the Women and Children's Subcommittee of the Gandhi Centenary Committee. She noticed the workers toiling at the site where the Gandhi Centenary exhibition was coming up – the children lying exposed in neglected conditions. With the speed and determination characteristic of her personality, she set up a subcommittee ... coaxed the contractor to provide a tent, *asked around for a child care worker... collected some funds... and without fuss or any detailed survey to discover the felt needs, which were so obvious anyway, her practical and direct approach made the humble setup happen without fuss.*

How did it begin?

Meera talked to the mothers at the construction site... some were friendly, others suspicious... but the event began... setting into motion other ripples. Her straightforward action-response attitude took place in an environment which was welfare-oriented. The desultorily trained balsevika was indifferent... hours were long and arduous... with children to be cleaned up, who returned dirtier the next day. Undaunted, little experienced, and with practically no help available, but with much determination, a few more creches began. With the realization that there were legal obligations on the part of the contractor to provide for a creche at work sites... difficult negotiations were initiated. It was a new experience for contractors... and certainly the beginnings were not impressive: the creches could not stand the scrutiny of norms of hygiene, professional child care, or even adequacy of shelter... but there was warmth and understanding within an environment the mothers knew was compatible with their own... a process had begun.

Mobile Creches was registered in 1969 as a separate society with a donation of Rs.100 to start a bank account. Meera put her full faith into the operation of this movement so that a work ethic was incorporated into its constitution... an ethic that has been the mainstay of Mobile Creches ever since. A movement working with the people *in situ*, by a group of articulate and dynamic women, pulling together as a team to make things happen, despite all odds.

How did it grow?

Looking back over the 25 years since its inception, from a time of simple structures of mobile tents, with a few necessities stored in trunks and days spent cajoling parents, arguing with contractors to give a little sheltered space within the construction site... some water, and in dark winters, some electricity... Mobile Creches has spread to three cities. Today it has about 24 centres in Delhi, 22 in Bombay and 8 in Pune with 4200-4500 young children at any one time. The organisation spans wide distances from Delhi to Gurgaon (in the adjoining Haryana state) and in Bombay from the Dharavi slums to Thane district, while concentrating in the city of Pune. Tables 1 and 2 summarise the growth over time and the reach in space.

Several of the pathfinders who had struggled through the initial days with Meera to keep the services going have said :

...the unique quality that has kept the movement going was that we were confronted with human disparities... a cognitive dissonance, if you will. With Meera's charismatic leadership, we wanted to do

Table 1 **Cumulative total of centres run 1969-1994**

	Year of inception	No. of centres run
Delhi	1969	194
Bombay	1972	143
Pune	1980	25
All India	-	362

Table 2 **Number of centres in 1993-94**

	Cumulative number	Average number	Centres opened	Centres closed
Delhi	26	24	5	4
Bombay	25	22	6	3
Pune	9	8	3	1
All India	60	54	14	8

something, although we had no set plan in our minds in the beginning. These human beings showed us that in spite of poverty there was an inner strength... they ended their day with a smile on their faces. We wanted to energise a group of dedicated workers, primarily to care for these children, and also to relieve mothers of their anxiety for the child's care and protection. We gradually developed approaches... directly for the child and indirectly for the mother and older children in the family. We believed in a team approach... a participatory consensus on how to synchronise our activities to offer regular and quality services... the honesty of purpose is what carried us onwards. Whoever joined in the initial stages had to be willing to do field work... to sit on the ground with workers, with no distance of class or hierarchy.

Since 1969, when the work began in a humble way with a membership of seven to form a society under the Societies Registration Act (1860), the organisation has progressed in established practices and a disciplined regularity of services for children who have now grown up. From a few huts, the organisation has grown into a network of centres... some in municipality-loaned buildings, others in lean-to shacks against gigantic construction sites... others in newly and specially built rooms... and still others in damp murky basements of unfinished constructions. Being an apolitical organisation, with no axe to grind, the

Fig.1a : Duration of stay of children reached 1993 - 94 (less than one year)

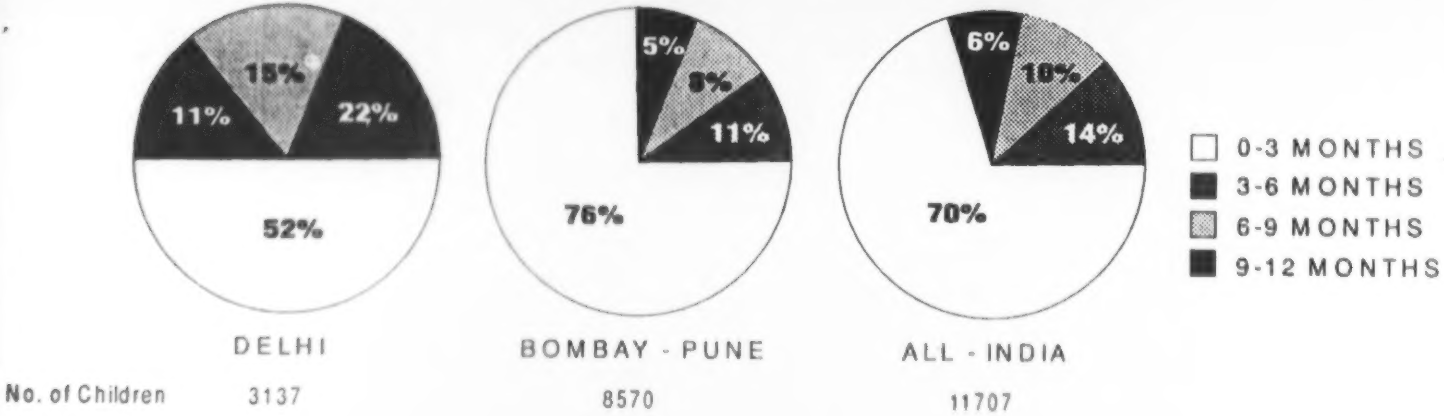
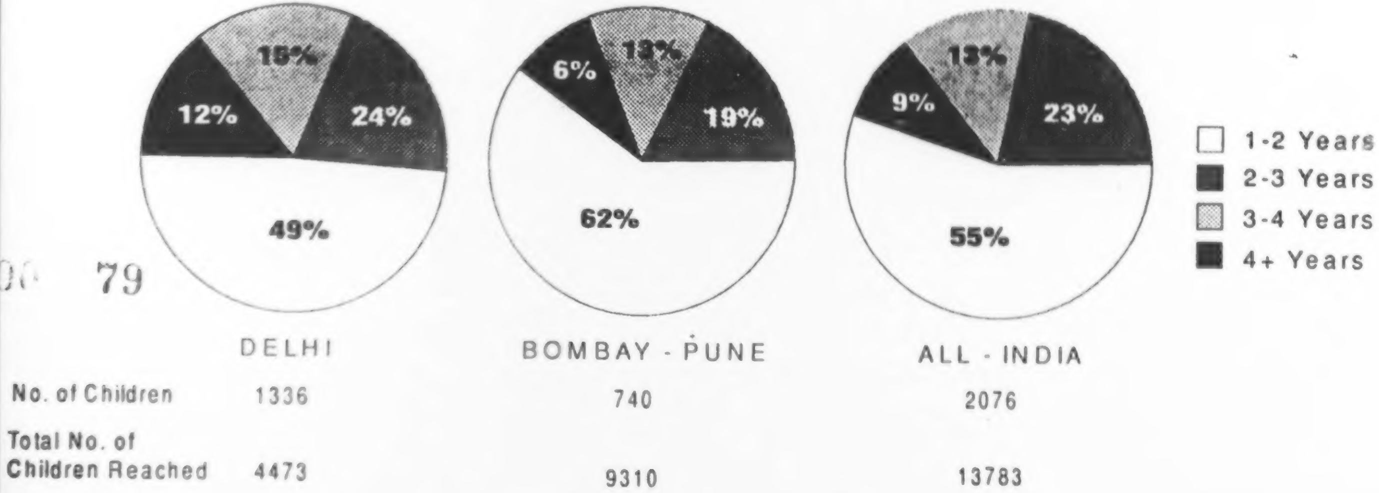


Fig.1b : Duration of stay of children reached 1993 - 94 (more than one year)



centre plays a quiet but unique role, moving along with construction workers from site to site, and known to whole communities of construction officials from the *thekedar* • to the *jamadar* •, the municipality officials and other NGOs.

From 'mobile' to 'non-mobile' creches

In 1973, when there was a sudden slump in construction activity, Mobile Creches, which had by then developed some expertise in day-care, decided to enter slums in order to reach out to underprivileged urban children. Three years later, in a massive upheaval of the population, thousands living in slums were shifted to a ring of resettlement colonies around Delhi, and Mobile Creches went with them. However, the priority target group even now remains the children of migrant construction workers.

While the slum parents are non-mobile and relatively stable, the construction worker communities, because of the nature of building construction, are transitory. Depending upon the season and the need for their kind of labour at the sites, they move from one site to another. Hence the difference in patterns of attendance between the 'mobile' and 'non-mobile' creches. Table 3, which contrasts the total number of children touched by the programme in a given year and the average number likely to be found on any given day, reflects the mobility of the population. Figure 1 gives a picture, on the other hand, of the pattern of attendance, pointing out the difference between Delhi, which serves a number of slums/resettlements and Bombay-Pune, with their relatively mobile population.

Objectives of the organisation

This major objective was and is:

- Providing young children of construction women workers with a set of holistic development facilities, and working to pioneer a system of day-care. Later other objectives came into focus. These are:
- Creating and maintaining an *esprit de corps* among workers
- Developing competence and the professional calibre of the organization

Table 3 **Total and average numbers of children reached 1993-94**

	*CS	**R/S	Total	Average
Delhi	2562	1911	4473	1689
Bombay-Pune	8778	532	9310	2615
All India	11340	2443	13783	4304

*CS - Construction Sites **R/S - Resettlements / Slums

Note: • *thekedar*: contractor, *jamadar*: labour sub-contractor

- Creating a decentralized, autonomous and institutionalized system
- Interacting on a shared basis with parents, community and contractor
- Sharing experiential learning through training personnel of other similar organisations
- Lobbying and networking for the cause of the migrant labourer's child

The beginning was an ad hoc strategy in response to an immediate need: to provide mother and child with quality services on the site. The answer was to be on the spot and at hand. In the early years, the system was built up, almost brick by brick, to help a population that is often in transit.

Interviews with personnel at various levels stress the sense of leadership that pervades the organisation at all levels. It is a collective effort to find solutions, make decisions and meet challenges. As one volunteer boldly asserts,

> *Whatever happens to us... long hours... hassles... situations that seem to have no solutions... the will and determination to make things happen at the field site are the most important.*

The beginning was an ad hoc strategy in response to an immediate need: to provide mother and child with quality services on the site. The answer was to be on the spot and at hand.

2 DYNAMICS OF CHANGE

Mobile Creches has come a long way since its humble beginning in 1969. By 1988, an office building for governance of the three cities was completed and by 1994, there were 300 organising, supervising and field staff.

The story of growth

In the words of a pathfinder:

Initially the programme had a middle-class orientation, with housewives who had professional skills and with elitist fund-raisers. There were frequent communications on how to resolve challenging issues and much conscious effort on creating a rapport-building atmosphere among the workers and the mothers, and a constant reforming of activities and supervision of services.

At the beginning, there was a dilemma in policy, as to whether the child should receive elitist treatment.. be taken in a car to a hospital... have chairs to sit on, and an environment different from what the child was used to. Another pioneer said:

Sensibly, we were strict that the environment be deliberately kept no different from home, but with a very decisive difference... cleanliness of the environment and person, treating the child as an individual in a group, keeping the events as culturally familiar and easy as possible, even to encouraging older children who came in after their school hours for tutorials, to play, to help with the younger ones in activities such as combing their hair, helping in the distribution of milk. But we always had a well-organised schedule... a holistic movement to give the child a sense of belonging, in an environment that treated him/her as an individual in spite of the rapid turnover at construction sites.

In the early seventies, on a crest of meeting with support and successes, the organisation began to grow both in number of centres and programme components. There was strengthening of non-formal education for school-going children, maintenance of the health status of the children, vocational training for boys, assistance in getting school-age children their birth certificates for admission into municipal schools, conducting demonstrations on food hygiene and family planning for mothers. **Lok Doot**, an educational theatre troupe, was created to perform

.on themes relevant to the community. Various programmes for outreach, in-service and pre-service training were also initiated.

The consensus was that the tasks taken on with great enthusiasm were becoming difficult to orchestrate in a cohesive manner.

The demise of Meera in 1977 created a deep void, and management of the organisation devolved upon three consecutive chairpersons with fixed terms of office. Structures took shape to give Mobile Creches more freedom and flexibility in operation. In the 80s, a Management Committee for Delhi was set up so that the parent body could focus on macro-activities of policy programming, monitoring and fund-raising related to the enhancement of all its branches at Delhi, Bombay and Pune.

Facing new challenges

Simultaneously, events took place in quick succession to hasten this process of "institutionalisation." The 1978 amendment to the Industrial Disputes Act sought to bring all NGOs under the category of industry. The Finance Act of 1983 strangulated fund-raising activities, as funds raised by sales were to be considered taxable.

This evoked a salary bargaining strike, in 1981, of a few workers, mainly males working in adult education classes. The consequences involved legal matters for which Mobile Creches was largely unprepared. Further, in 1988-89, questions about the institution's finances were asked in Parliament, leading to a long-drawn-out bureaucratic enquiry and auditing of the previous five years' accounting, relating to sources of funding. Meanwhile, the Hospital Bill, intended to free NGOs from the cumbersome taxation and dispute settlement procedures of the Industrial Disputes Act remained, and still is, on the anvil.

All these efforts took their toll and the organization became still more severe with itself.

No honorarium was to be given to any volunteer unless the person had a well-defined responsibility for which there was accountability... we had to put into practice a set of rules and regulations for internal promotions.

All these upheavals did not affect the delivery of services for the migrant child or the resettlement and the slum child. But policy changes were initiated to balance the attitudinal component of a spirit of voluntarism with that of increasing 'institutionalisation' through administrative strategies. A need was felt for a professional cadre to ensure continuity. Further, the management was concerned about the continuance of funds, as recurring components of the budget were high, especially in the case of staff salaries.

Some policy changes

Streamlining the management, extending the professional profile of the organisation and intensifying the vibrancy of its activities for child care, while limiting the size of the operation, were some of the major changes that took place in the late 80's.

These, however, triggered a sense of diffidence among the personnel. They were now in the vulnerable position of being evaluated on criteria other than seniority. Those who had better educational qualifications and proven ability were now in more favourable positions, while those with only years of experience to their credit, felt unsure of their future progress. They needed reassurance, which the decision-makers were quick to perceive, and gave willingly. This vibrancy in seeking strategies to motivate staff to higher levels of competence, inspite of the problems it would face, is the hallmark of Mobile Creches.

The members of the Managing Committee resigned in 1992 because of overload of tasks, leading to renewed fluidity. Members of the Governing Body took on tasks for the Delhi Branch, and quickly put together a Working Committee for it. It has as its temporary head, the chairperson of the Governing Body, who has an overloaded working day. The organisation is once again at the stage of trying to find ways and means of extricating the Governing Body members from the Delhi branch, and restoring the balance between the two.

> This vibrancy in seeking strategies to motivate staff to higher levels of competence, inspite of the problems it would face, is the hallmark of Mobile Creches.

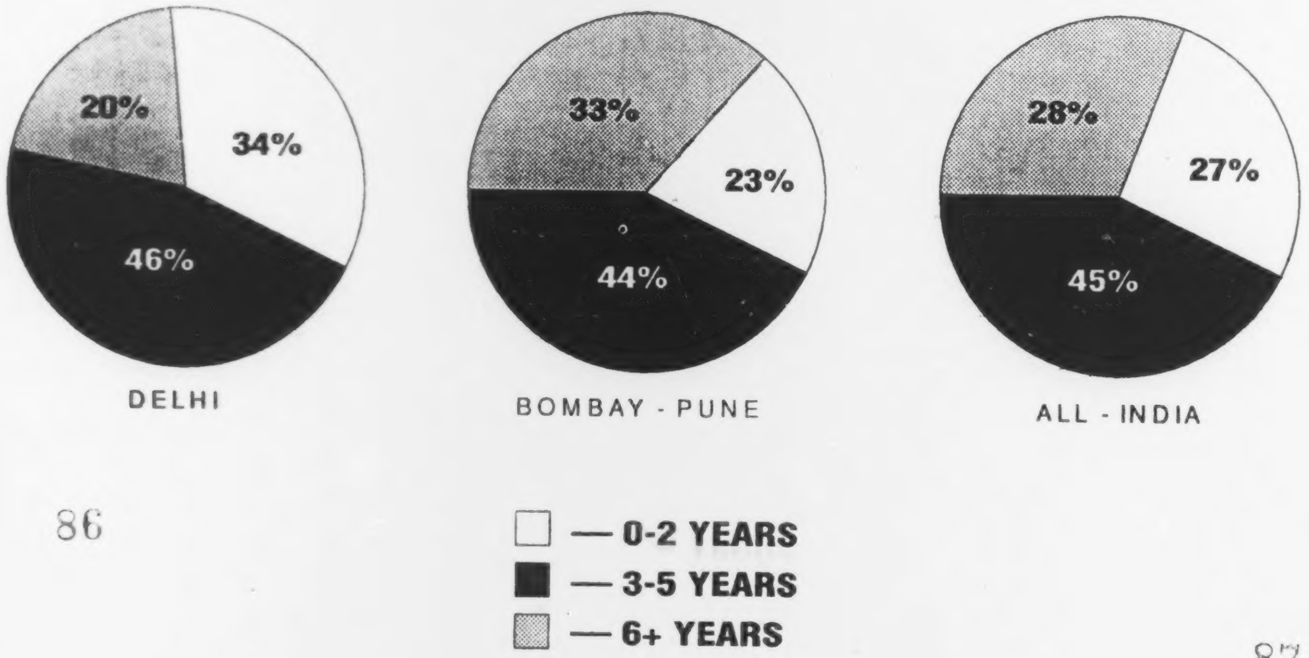


Fig.2 : Agewise monthly average of children on roll 1993 - 94

3 CHILD CARE AT THE CENTRE

What a centre looks like

At construction sites, accommodation is allotted to the centres by contractors. It varies, and is usually makeshift. To bring in a cheerful atmosphere, workers brighten up the place with children's happy drawings and simple hand-made toys. They build an atmosphere of warmth, happiness and security carefully nurtured by the organisers over the years. An environment of comfort, clean, caring and happy, exists. Over the years, standards for the centre have been set for equipment, staff-child ratio, schedule of activities and community outreach. (Appendix 1).

What happens there

Children are in three groups: babies and toddlers, ranging from 0-3 years, a preschool group of 3-5 year olds and an older group, anywhere from 5 to 10 years old. In the afternoon, primary school children come in for informal tutorials, and for those who are unable to gain admission in schools, efforts are made to help them follow the standard municipal school curriculum.

Adults are busy in between the set activities: maintaining attendance/health/nutrition records, getting snacks/supplements ready and served with the help of older children. Children are brought in the mornings, as and when the parents get to work, and cheerfully greeted and chatted with. Records of perishable items consumed, of materials used, and cleaning, sorting, shelving, setting-up for the next day, are managed in a disciplined and team-oriented spirit. Food supplements are milk, a fruit (when available), and a porridge prepared by the helper and others who may be free to help and who get the work done smoothly. Each day brings its own challenges and rewards, as may be seen from a description of the activities at a centre.

They build an atmosphere of warmth, happiness and security carefully nurtured by the organisers over the years. An environment of comfort, clean, caring and happy, exists.

Life on the worksite

The hand that rocks the cradles

A typical day at a centre May 1990

8.00 am

It is summer, and as Maya walks towards the centre she can already feel the searing heat that will soon replace these few morning hours of respite. Maya is the centre in-charge. She hopes there will be electricity today. And water. The centre is always a low priority for the building contractor. There has been no electricity since 2.00 pm the previous day and the children are suffering from prickly heat boils over their bodies. She steels herself for a confrontation.

The site

The construction site boasts of several modern-looking structures which, when completed, will be parts of a large research institute. The skyline above the site is dramatically uneven - high peaks of the finished structures interspersed with low-lying shacks where the labourers live and large patches of cleared land where the foundations of new structures are being laid. The eye moves uneasily, jerkily across this uneven landscape - the inequality it bespeaks. The Mobile Creches centre is situated unobtrusively behind a nearly-completed building. To the right and left of the centre, construction is still taking place. No pretty gardens or playgrounds for the children here. Only gaping foundation pits and steel girders, piles of brick and mortar and dry cement dust constantly assailing the nostrils. At this hour of the morning, the landscape is particularly grim and abandoned-looking. Even the ubiquitous dust has not stirred yet. The only signs of life come from within the squalid labourers' shacks some distance away, where the morning meal is being prepared.

The centre

The centre is a temporary structure about 50 square feet in area, walls of bare brick and a roof of tin sheets. Two low brick walls divide the room into three sections: the largest section is for the creche children (0 - 2 yrs), and the two others are for the balwadi children (3 - 5 yrs) and children of school-going age (6 upwards) in the Non-Formal Education (NFE) section. From the outside, the centre is indistinguishable except for the sounds of children laughing, or crying. Inside, the creche section is clean and bright but minimally furnished; baby cots, fashioned out of wooden beams and pieces of cloth (like hammocks) line the walls. There are three makeshift second-hand wooden cupboards. Two large steel trunks, a constant reminder of the itinerant existence of both the creche and the children, complete the modest furnitu[illegible] The centre of the room is taken up by plastic mats on which the children will sit, eat, soil and play during the day. The two other sections are similarly furnished except that the balwadi has a large *durrie* in the centre instead of plastic mats and the NFE section has four low wooden tables in addition to the *durrie*.

The groundwork

Modest though it is, the centre is a triumph for Mobile Creches. It was started almost a year ago, against great odds. The contractor had been more resistant than most, and had finally conceded a small space for the centre only after the most dogged persuasion and some good, old-fashioned nagging. After the big battle was won, there were small strategic skirmishes where territory was won bit by bit by using tact; running water, electricitysupply and a small bathroom have been gained in this way.

Between 8.30 am and 9.00 am, there is a long procession of mothers leaving their babies for the day. Some older children also come in to leave their siblings. Many mothers stay and talk to the caretakers until the siren sounds.

8.30 am - 9.30 am

Maya's four co-workers have already started getting ready for the day. Two will look after the balwadi, one is in charge of the NFE children and Maya, who is the centre-in-charge, will work in the creche along with another full-timer and two part-time helpers provided by the contractor. A mixture of cereal and milk is already being prepared in the small kitchen. Devi is carrying a bucket outside to throw out its contents, leaving behind just a hint of phenyle in the air.

Two-year-old Gumna wails as her mother leaves her in the creche. Today she has come after a gap of 19 days. The family had gone back to the village for 15 days, and she was sick at home for 4 days. Devi, a creche worker, takes Gumna in her lap without batting an eyelid at her mother's long explanations. Her crying will pass, she says.

Off to work

Meal time is the best time

It happens all the time. Every few minutes Gumna's older sister, Tara, comes in anxiously to placate the baby. This fierce protectiveness towards younger siblings is very characteristic of migrant children. Until the creche workers have succeeded in establishing a relationship of trust with the family, it continues. This is one among many reasons that the three sections of the centre are not physically closed off from each other - to allow for the natural spillover of children from one to the other. The centre is an integrated space; their space. By 9.30 am the children are settling in for the day, and Tara finally carts Gumna off outside, balancing the baby on her thin hip.

The morning is taken up in feeding the creche children. Balma, one of the part-time helpers, brings the cereal and milk out in a large pot and starts ladling it out in small, round aluminium bowls. Devi and Maya are, meanwhile, absorbed in getting the children ready for the meal, putting on clean bibs for those who are awake and playing about on the plastic mats. Some are barely a few months old and are fast asleep in their hammocks.

The goal for the next half hour is to get the babies fed. And gradually the task gets done. A few children are old enough to try and spoon the mixture into their own mouths. Others have to be fed. It is a messy business, and many have the cereal smeared on their chins and noses. But today the entire process is faster than on most days. Although the Centre has an average attendance of 85, today there are barely 35. Many children are lying sick at home, having fallen prey to a measles epidemic on the site.

At home

Working at play

10.00 am - 12.00 noon: Creche

Now, the children are being given water in little round aluminium bowls. These are the only utensils in the centre, used for both food and water. Then Aarti, one of the supervisors, here for the day on her rounds, settles down to play with the children. One girl snuggles up into her lap, while the others sit and play with toys or crawl about on the large plastic mat. One baby decides it is time to cry again. But he is soon fascinated by a bright piece of paper he has spotted outside the balwadi entrance, and is up and away as fast has he can on all fours. By 11.30 am, it is time to count the number of children who are on special diets. Aarti looks into the register which is used to record nutritional data and calls out the numbers to Devi. This is also an opportunity for her to check the registers and ensure that data is being recorded regularly - for the duration of her visit, she is both a creche worker and a supervisor. It is now nearly 12.00 noon and the staff are busy preparing for another mealtime.

The staff have negotiated a time with the contractor when nursing mothers can come to the centre and feed their babies, without their wage being slashed. Shortly after 10.30 am they start arriving and then again at mealtime (12.00 noon). Lactating mothers and those who suffer from anaemia are also on special diets. Noni's mother finishes breastfeeding her youngest son in the creche and going over to the NFE section, asks Noni to fetch water for their home. The 12-year-old runs off in the direction of the labourers' shacks. He will return in a while and pick up his lessons where he left off.

Aarti finds time to talk to Girija's mother, who is just about to leave. Girija is 11 years old and used to come to the NFE while her brother was looked after in the creche. She has not been seen for several weeks. Why? The mother is shy and hesitant. She finally confesses - her husband disapproves of his daughter attending the centre. This spurs a good half hour of advocacy on the developmental needs of the girl child. Many positive examples are cited from the labourer community in the site. The *jamadar* himself sends his daughter to the local Municipal Corporation school, so why should you compromise poor Girija's future, Aarti asks? The corporation school seems to interest Girija's mother. Will there be only girls in the class, she enquires? The mother is still sceptical by the time she leaves. Aarti and Devi make a mental note to talk to her again, or perhaps to her husband.

10.00 am - 12. 00 noon: Balwadi

In the balwadi, 22 children are busy in small groups organised around low tables. The playthings are simple: pebbles, bottle-caps, pieces of string, cut-up cardboard, wooden blocks. There is a conscious effort to fashion educational games and toys out of cheap material, easily available on a construction site. This free play continues in the balwadi until about 10.45 am. Then they all march out 'army-like' in neat lines to the toilet just outside the main entrance.

At 11.00 am, there is a change. The children are gathered in a large circle for what could well be the favourite part of their day - story-telling. Today it is a story about animals in the jungle. Elephants, monkeys, lions, bears! They listen with wide-eyed rapture. They are encouraged by the balwadi worker to recall a visit to the zoo, which the centre had organised earlier in the year. The bolder chldren shout out the names of animals to match the teacher's description.

The story-telling continues for a long time. There is one interruption. Vidya, the young mother of three-year-old Ramkanya, comes in anxiously. This is her second visit today. Ramkanya has been sick with severe diarrhoea; she is worried and wants the child by her side. By her side, but where? Vidya does two kinds of work - mixing cement and carrying bricks. Her anxiety clouds the fact that Ramkanya will probably be better looked after in the balwadi than near a cement mixer. When Vidya is told that the doctor on duty at the centre will examine her, she is sceptical. Being new to the area, she is yet to trust the balwadi worker.

10.00 am - 12.00 noon: Non-Formal Education (NFE) Section

At 10.00 am, the NFE teacher calls out to the older children, announcing the beginning of their day. They have been playing outside on the three swings. They now troop in through the creche section. Many stop to take a peep at their younger siblings asleep in their hammocks. One rocks a baby sister back to sleep. There are about 20 children in the NFE section, both boys and girls, aged 6 - 14. Tara walks in with a quietened Gumna and deposits her with one of the creche workers. She quickly runs back to the NFE section before Gumna has a chance to register her abandonment and cry again.

The children settle themselves on the *durrie* around the four wooden tables. They have all been attending the centre for

Close ties

different durations. Puja, a young girl of 13, has been there the longest, since the centre first opened. She looks visibly different from some of the others; cleaner and well-kempt, her hair neatly oiled back in a pony tail. The first hour of the morning is occupied with maths. The NFE children are naturally the most orderly and the morning proceeds without too many interruptions. Gumna has by now found her bearings and arrives on all fours looking for her sister. Tara settles the baby on her lap and proceeds with her lesson, 10 + 10 = 20.

12.00 noon - 2.00 pm

There is *khichdi* and vegetable for lunch today – simple but nutritious. First the creche and then the older children are fed. Thereafter the clean-up routine starts all over again. The older balwadi children wash their own dishes. The floor is mopped by one of the workers. All the children go home for an hour or so after lunch. By 1.00 pm, the centre has emptied out. It is suddenly silent. This is a much-needed break for the workers, who have been on their feet all morning. Aarti, the supervisor, uses the lunch break to make a few organisational queries. She and the in-charge discuss the progress of one of the trainees placed at the centre and the agenda for the next in-charges' meeting.

2.00 pm - 3.30 pm

At 2.00 pm, the mothers are expected back at work, and the centre is bustling with activity again. In the creche the major task remaining for the day is administration of the vitamin dose. Once this is over, the creche children spend a most of the afternoon asleep in their hammocks. In the balwadi and the NFE, the afternoon is spent on creative work. The children in both sections are kept busy with crayons and drawing paper. The older children help the younger children learn while they play, reinforcing the child-to-child approach. Phoolkumari speaks animatedly about a fantasy world she has drawn, where children have flowers and butterflies for playmates. At 3.30 pm, they have outdoor games.

3.45 pm

At 3.45 pm, the children are given a simple snack of *channa*, just before they leave. Some children furtively stuff their *channa* into their pockets, perhaps to share with others at home. Between 4.00 pm and 4.30 pm, mothers start arriving, weary from the worksite, to pick up the children. The cloth hammocks are untied and the outdoor equipment is shifted indoors. There are many eager hands ready to help with turning off the lights and fans, locking the windows.

Aarti and Maya head off determinedly towards the administrative quarters on the site in search of the contractor's assistant. The centre thankfully had power supply today. They just want to help their luck along a little for tomorrow as well.

Tea break

Young child minder

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4 COMMUNITY PERCEPTIONS

There is a great deal of difference between the mobile construction workers and those in the slums/resettlement colonies, making for two kinds of relationship between creche and home.

The contrast

Most of the labourers on a typical construction site belong to the same village from a neighbouring state. They are part of a labour "gang" who move from site to site under one *jamadar*, also from the same village. Even on sites where construction is for three years, labour turnover is frequent. There is little security beyond the here and now, because most don't know where they will be tomorrow Irregular attendance is also caused by occasional visits that the labourers' families make to their villages, during slack periods on the site. This is a challenge to the creche workers, to make each day the best for the child who may be with them for only a few months.

On the other hand, the settled colonies have a number of other facilities available to them: the hospital, the elected members of the ward to whom they have access, the market places, the consumer facilities, and the relatively stable incomes of many working members of the families. Over the years, these colonies have developed an attitude that the Mobile Creches centre is a service, like primary school, and the centres are often referred to as the 'milk and cereal distribution centres.'

What the community thinks

The children of Mobile Creches and their mothers give their impressions spontaneously. A 9-year old says :

I like coming here... there is so much to do, and the didis are very kind. We learn many things... play with toys which we do not have at home, and have a nice feeling of being wanted. Besides, my younger sister who is a baby in that cradle also gets looked after, and I can study without the worry of having to look after her.

A young mother who was breast-feeding her child, said:

I came to this city three months ago... my baby was delivered in the hospital... this is my first baby... a son. I help my husband at the construction site carrying baskets of sand. This place is very good for my baby... I do not know anybody or what this city is like... but so long as my baby is well cared for ... I can work without fear ..

A young woman who spent her first seven years in a centre:

I can still remember my didis who used to help me with my homework and all the fun I had when I was in the older group. We sang songs and danced... and helped the didis keep the place clean and tidy and look after younger children... I combed their hair... treated them like my didis treated me, telling them what to do, how to do things, and I was happy that I had a safe place to be with other children when my parents were working. I am so attached to this centre, that I always wanted to be a teacher like the didis, and now I am a balwadi teacher. My parents are happy that I have a place of work which is safe and secure.

A young man who finished and is awaiting employment remarks :

I remember that I always wanted to act in dramas and my didis helped me play out parts when we had performances. These days I am helping out another organisation in street dramas... something I learned very early at the centre...

As another ex-beneficiary, a young man of 22 years, said:

I remember the days at the centre as being some of my happiest.The didis are always happy to see us and even now share our experiences. They listen to us, and still guide us and consult us. We feel we are visiting our homes.

A resettlement mother employed in a regular job, said:

All three of my children have been in the creche. One is now at the municipal primary school. The didis helped me get his birth registered on an affidavit, since there was no birth registration at the village where he was born... I now have a steady job as a cleaning woman in the NDMC office, and can work peacefully knowing that my children are well looked after when my husband and I are working... not only that, it is a great opportunity for the children to be prepared for school...

One of the fathers who came to pick up his child was very articulate about the 'ease of mind' and the care given to his child:

He will now learn to read and write and do well at school... I do not want him to be a casual labourer like me... I would like him to grow up and be a person like the thekedar.

I can work peacefully knowing that my children are well looked after when my husband and I are working... not only that, it is a great opportunity for the children to be prepared for school...

Table 4 **Admission to municipal schools 1993-94**

	Delhi			Bombay		
	CS	R/S	Total	CS	S	Total
Average no. of centres run	14	10	24	19	3	22
Nos. admitted	65	180	245	122	33	155
Nos. passed	46	163	209	86	33	119
Nos. failed	2	8	10	5	--	5
Nos. discontinued	17	9	26	11	--	11
No information	--	--	--	20	--	20

*CS - Construction Sites, **R/S - Resettlements / Slums, ***S - Slums

Table 5 **Children on scholarships in Delhi 1993-94**

	CS		R/S		
	M	F	M	F	Total
No. of children on 1-4-93	17	10	22	14	63
New scholars 1993-94	6	3	15	11	35
Total no. of scholars on 31-3-94	23	13	37	25	98

*CS - Construction Sites, **R/S - Resettlements / Slums, ***M - Male ****F - Female

The older children are helped to catch up with their schooling and to enter local municipal schools. The turnover apparent in Table 4 does not indicate 'failure' so much as reflect the grim reality of life for migrant construction workers. Table 5, on the other hand, shows how many have 'survived' and gone on to high school and beyond.

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There have been no systematic evaluations of the reactions of the parents. There are, however, reports of coverage, attendance, health and hygiene and the educational standards of children in the Annual Reports as well as in studies undertaken by others and the occasional publication EKALAVYA. (Appendix 2 lists some major studies). The consensus indicates that the organisation is looked upon differently from the point of view of the construction workers (the mobile community) and the non-mobile (the residential slum/resettlement colonies population).

The mobile construction workers have a closer working relationship with the centres as compared to the well-settled communities whose life styles are different.

One teacher points out the differences succintly :

For the construction workers, the site is a temporary home, and any help they get is gratefully received, whereas the settled communities look upon the centre as a school. The environment in which the community lives is disorganised... men gamble and drink... and there is crime... most of the women work as household cleaners, and so leaving the children at centres relieves them of child care while they work... but they are a little sophisticated... they want us to teach the three R's and help in admission in schools... We help them out in these areas also...

The contractors' role

Building contractors often employ the same set of labourers, taking them from site to site. Under the law, contractors are expected to run a creche where there are twenty or more women workers. But the law is all too easy to evade. Contractors are not legally obliged to provide support or facilities for voluntary agencies to run creches. But in the case of Mobile Creches, many respect the organisation, and although there is much negotiation and delay on their part, they eventually provide space, water and electricity, pay for one or two temporary helpers and a token amount for yearly recurring expenses. They also help onspecial occasions like festivals, sports days, picnics and drama perfomances.

It is evident from visits to the centres that there is an overwhelming positive response from the community of workers. This community attitude spreads to the *jamadar* who represents the group, and in a sense he is the liaison and the monitor, who helps the centres to get the facilities.

Balwadi teachers, in-charges and supervisors have said:

The jamadar is very helpful to us in our day-to-day activities. If the water supply has been stopped or

5 THE CHILD CARE WORKER

Who she is

The field-level workers are unquestionably the focal point in the programme. Originally from an economically needy class, they now form a homogenous group well acculturated to the people with whom they worked.

About a hundred staff members today have spent more than 15 years at Mobile Creches, while in the last five years, 20 new girls who have completed the Balpalika training have joined. Of the workers in the creche (0-3 year children) who play the most crucial role in the organisation, 58% have had no access to education, while the rest have less than high school education. The Balwadi and the Non-Formal Education workers are usually high school graduates. Since 1988 any new recruit in this group has also completed the Balpalika training.

When the programme was scaled down in 1982 and the adult education and vocational training activities stopped, the activities were limited to children in the age group 0-6 years. As a result, the highest attrition has taken place from amongst the Balwadi or NFE teachers. Most staff members left due to family problems or marriages, while about 10 from those who left have joined some other agencies in Delhi.

Her job responsibilities

Job descriptions are well defined, although there is an overlapping of duties. Each adult in the centre is responsible for a group of children, and as and when needed, there is support from the others. The workers are prepared for the multiple tasks of day care, in addition to the educational focus, and all are able to assist with the babies when required. For example, Devi calls herself a creche worker, but the term is misleading. Like the other staff, she turns to whatever task is at hand; cleaning, washing floors, playing with and caring for the youngones, teaching older children, medicating sick babies. Each worker is capable of delivering all aspects of integrated child-care.

When the trainee is recruited as a teacher, she becomes responsible for her group and its activities, and is encouraged to rotate with the age groups, so that she is familiar with the whole gamut of activities.

The centre-in-charge allocates work, files records, supervises stores, monitors the attendance of the children, checks daily *the electricity is off, he helps in getting it operating again.*

There are few hassles with some long-standing contractors, as the procedure is well set. However, the general role of the contractors in creches is mainly support in cash and kind. They do not get personally involved in the centre's activities, and often do not know much of what is going on.

One contractor said:

Yes, I know that the centre existing at my construction site is very useful. I have seen that when it is there, the productivity of work goes up – mainly because the parents, especially the mothers, are at ease. I think all builders and contractors who have such long contracts should provide for such services.

However, he ends on a note of warning:

But it is not easy... we are going away from Delhi proper, and the Mobile Creches workers will find it difficult to come and go. Besides, we are getting technologically-oriented... we are using sophisticated machinery, and in some operations, we do not require labour, especially female labour...

So the dialogue goes on, to educate through discussion on the need for regular contractor support for the young of their labourers.

I know that the centre existing at my construction site is very useful. I have seen that when it is there, the productivity of work goes up – mainly because the parents, especially the mothers, are at ease. I think all builders and contractors who have such long contracts should provide for such services.

plans, attends to new admissions, and communicates requirements to the supervisors. Roles and responsibilities in the centre have been standardised over years of trial and experiment, and articulated in such a way that everyone is clear about their tasks. The workers have a well-grounded attitude towards the dignity of labour, however detailed or messy. Whatever the number of adults, the work that is scheduled gets done, even if they have to do double-time work. Under the guidance of the senior worker and the supervisor, the management of equipment, teaching aids, supplies and programme materials are logistically well-maintained. Sometimes, delays in communication and supplies do occur, but these are mainly due to miscommunication, and lack of adequate information from the head office to the centre. Within the centre, co-workers are warm, friendly, supportive and family-like, with much stress on conflict resolution.

The motivation

Almost all paid workers in the organisation, whether in programming, supervising, managing or conducting the field activities, have been field workers at some time or the other and have risen from the ranks. Centre in-charges are given this responsibility after about 4-8 years of service. There are about 30 supervisors with different levels of responsibility, most of whom have on average spent 20-22 years in the organisation. Around 80% of these staff members joined as balwadi teachers. All those in the Coordinator or the Programme Officer positions are graduates. What really motivates them to do creche work ?

I lived near Nehru Place ... so I am from the same environment ... I was taken aback at the number of children to look after, especially the babies who needed attention all the time except when they were asleep ... sometimes they cried and cried .. How did I stay on? I think each one gave the other strength to tackle each problem as it came .. This was not like any ordinary creche.... We had all kinds of problems - leaking roofs, overflowing sewers, spread of communicable diseases from one child to another, as they live in close hutment dwellings. We have a regular visiting doctor ... and we keep medicines for ordinary ailments .. but still, sudden problems would face us ... and we would get together ... call our supervisors and find solutions.

It is not always easy : We had our centre almost on the roadside... we were teased by passers by... and sometimes arguments occurred when they made bad remarks... but they gradually stopped when we ignored them... we were there in numbers and not alone ... there are other types of centres to work in, but there are dangerous gundas, especially in bustees, but we eventually get respect. Our parents look upon this type of creche work as a safe place for girls to work ...

These field-level workers touched upon several aspects of the unique nature of the training and support given to them, to keep them working under difficult conditions, and yet to provide the best possible services they could, cheerfully, and as a team.

We tried to instil in our workers, in fact in ourselves, as we ourselves were not professionals,to provide for the child without being disenchanted with situational constraints. We did this deliberately and by inducting new untrained workers on an orientation basis, to help alongside an experienced worker. We watched their reactions , and if they could cope with the washing of babies' bottoms, soothing a crying child, feeding little ones and if we saw a high level of motivation, we recognized that the recruits were trainable. We have workers who have been with us for as many as twenty years, still cheerful irrespective of the low payand the hardships,still retaining a sense of confidence in contribution to a good cause...

The role of the supervisor

The workers do not operate in isolation; they are supported by a hierachy of supervisors, trainers and coordinators. Each supervisor oversees the work of two centres, records programme quality, offers guidance and help, checks schedules, and arranges for work distribution, even substituting for absentees when needed.They also liase with the zonal and programme units besides monitoring the health officer's visits, nutritional inputs and other matters arising from the contractor and/or the community. The supervisors are also trainers.

In good health ?

At the upper supervisory and management levels, the staff are again internally upgraded supervisors. Role performances and relationships, however, are a little blurred at this level, and the tendency towards officialdom becomes much too heavy for personnel who were previously used to a traditional, familial way of interaction.

In the organisation of workers, there are three levels: creche-based, supervisor-based and management-based, all linked by hierarchical lines. Lines are crossed and miscommunication and conflict sometimes follow because of the emphasis on democratic participation and the system of decision-making in a pooled manner. But this is offset by the system of constant and positive communication on issues.

The quality of work

The major concern of the organisation is its first love : the children of the construction workers. The worker was challenged: and the response came. It is not something that can be learnt from text books or formal training courses.

The few early-day pioneer organisers were everywhere supportive and persistent, but more importantly, as colleagues, and not as teachers or auditors. They gave the workers the courage of their conviction. The workers tried one alternative after another, while the organiser was constantly in the background - guiding, applauding, reinforcing and sometimes disagreeing.

If one method did not work, it did not matter, another would be tried. If a construction mother said no today - there was always tomorrow to try again. If a nursing mother came in ill and couldn't feed her baby, another solution was tried in showing her how to bottlefeed till she was better, or finding out if another nursing mother could help. If a primary school child came, wanting admission to a school, all efforts were made to get him into the nearest municipal school. If there was no fuel, a collection of kerosene would be made from hut to hut.

In the first crucial six years, systems were developed, practised and accepted. It was a constant struggle but a concrete success in these years. There were no toys, so the environmental scrap of bottletops, coloured papers and discarded materials from homes were used. There were no teaching materials, so bits and pieces were used: left-over wood from the carpenter, throw-away pieces from the plumber, tubes, pipes, some paints from the mason, make-do material - but "make them do what you want the children to know," was the watchword. The real-life experiences became the training ground and the skills of the workers were honed in the job situation itself. Holistic day-care became the creed with Mobile Creches - a creed that is lived out from day to day.

6 ORGANISATIONAL FRAMEWORK

The organisation of Mobile Creches has three levels: the governing level, the management level and the worker level. A look at the organogram reveals that the governing council is the apex body. The middle level is made up of the management or supervisory cadre, followed by the field workers at the base.

Administration

The main function of the administration is the management of funds. It is necessary to balance the allocation from the financial section and the recurring expenditure for the centres. The implementation of personnel rules and regulations is another of its concerns. All permanent staff have privileges that accrue to their positions.

Administration is also in charge of supplies and logistics. There is an elaborate system of maintaining records, inventories and indents, often checked and rechecked. Systematic measures have been introduced of late, which are sound, but lead to a great deal of cumbersome paperwork.

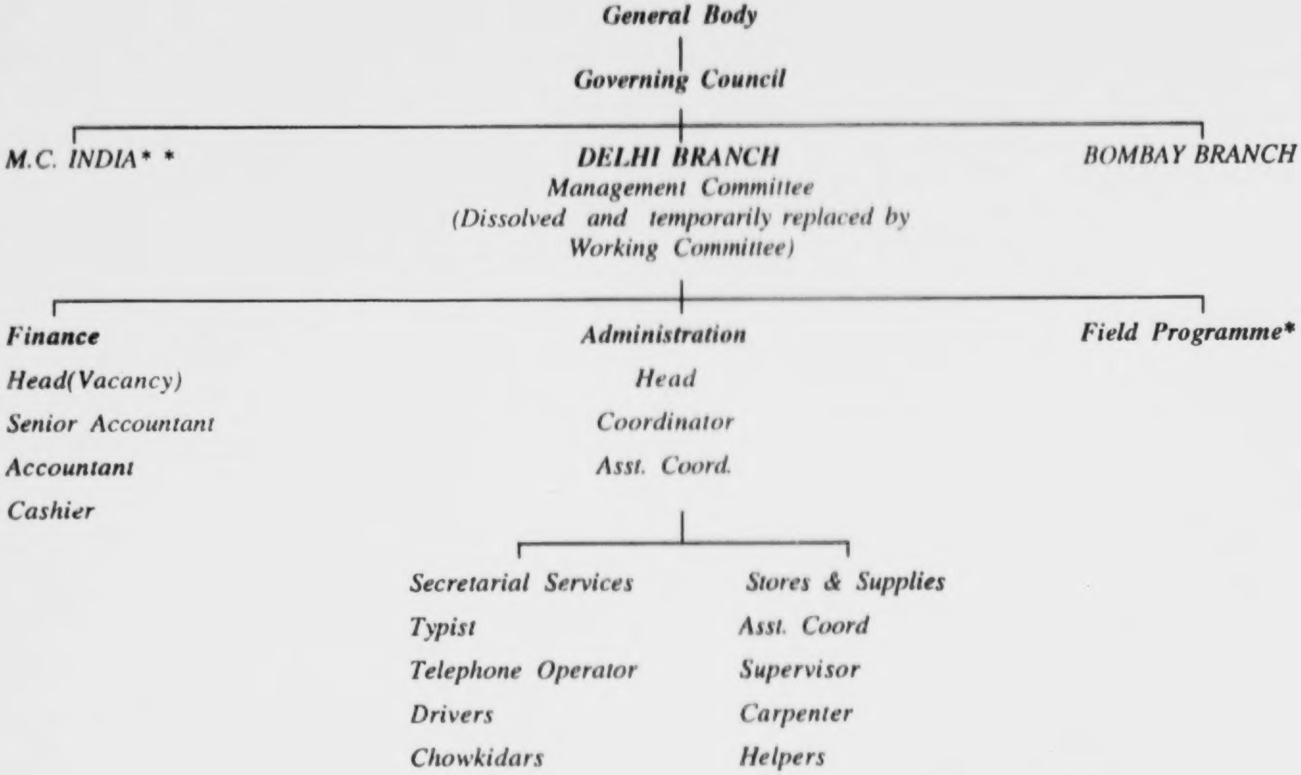
Logistical arrangements for deliveries of supplies are well standardised. A small amount of imprest money is with the zonal officers for distribution to the centres for the purchase of perishables. Furniture/equipment/utensils and linen are supplied by a centralised store. The arrangements, the delivery and the accounting are done at the zonal levels .

Budget estimates are usually based on the previous year's needs and on admissible essential requirements, through channels of requisitions. This chain ensures a system of checks and balance at all levels.

Supervision and management

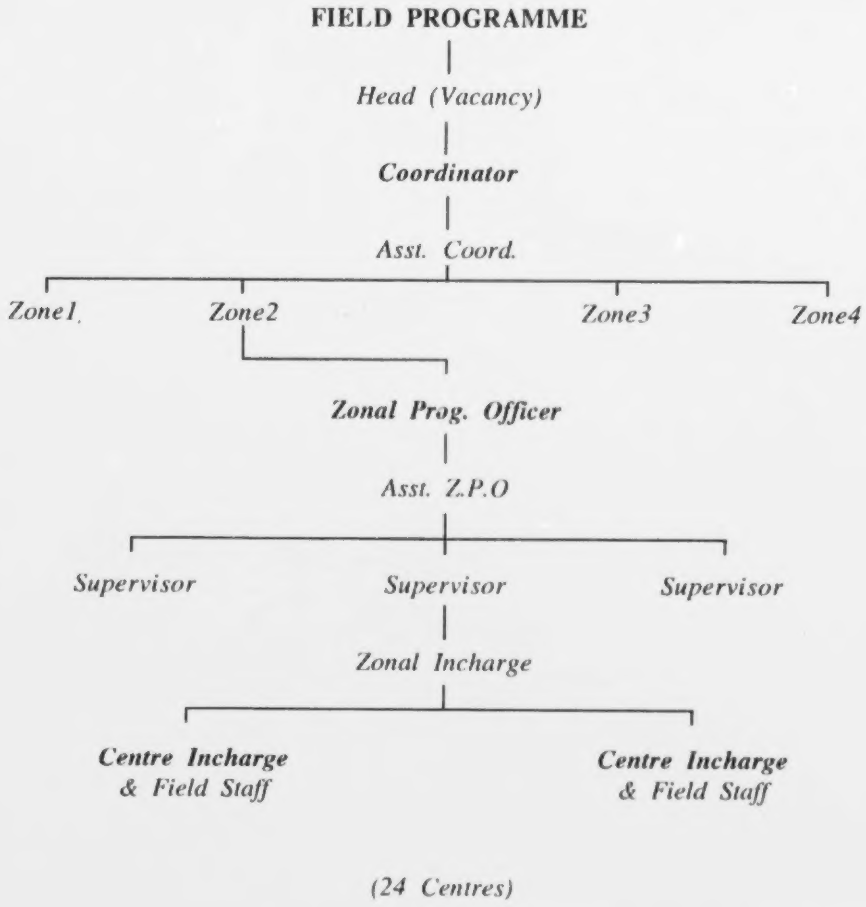
The system of supervision leads to various types of workshops-cum-meetings one set relates to the programme consisting of planning and development/implementation, which operates through a regular system of workshop sessions and in-house training sessions, dealing with one subject matter at a time, whether it is strengthening cognitive/socio-emotional/play way methods/record-keeping or simply information on the organisational structure. For new trainees, these meetings are held twice a month, and for the experienced workers once a month, so that every one in rotation gets to meet every other person across centres, across zones and between field level workers,

Fig.3 **ORGANOGRAM 1**


General Body
Governing Council
M.C. INDIA* *
DELHI BRANCH
Management Committee
(Dissolved and temporarily replaced by Working Committee)
BOMBAY BRANCH
Finance
Head(Vacancy)
Senior Accountant
Accountant
Cashier
Administration
Head
Coordinator
Asst. Coord.
Field Programme*
Secretarial Services
Typist
Telephone Operator
Drivers
Chowkidars
Stores & Supplies
Asst. Coord
Supervisor
Carpenter
Helpers

* Organogram 2, ** Organogram 3

Fig.4 **ORGANOGRAM 2**


FIELD PROGRAMME
Head (Vacancy)
Coordinator
Asst. Coord.
Zone1
Zone2
Zone3
Zone4
Zonal Prog. Officer
Asst. Z.P.O
Supervisor
Supervisor
Supervisor
Zonal Incharge
Centre Incharge & Field Staff
Centre Incharge & Field Staff
(24 Centres)

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middle-level managers and top policy decision-makers at the top.

A second set of meetings concern staff matters. Management procedures, filling up leave forms, and the structures of rules and regulations are discussed at these meetings along with the new recruitment/evaluation/grading/wage fixation policy.

Fortnightly supervisors' meetings also take place, bringing the two sets of supervisors together, in a Working Committee, composed of nine members from those in the middle-level grades. There is thus a coherence of suggestions and issues on staff representations brought to the Working Committee which meets once a month, reviews and takes decisions on matters regarding programme implementation. Representatives from the Governing Body, who for reasons of proximity are more involved in the activities of the Delhi branch, meet with Working Committee members to review policies, training and staff rules. These are then presented to the Governing Council, which meets three times a year, and is the final authority, especially on finance. While discussion is prolific at many levels, decision-making rests with a few. It is apparent that while the principles are in place, the strategies of a "hands on" approach are still in the process of development.

The organograms, while presenting a structure which is closely linked in terms of line of command and "democratic decentralisation," indicate the earnestness with which the policy makers are pursuing strategies to make the process work.

Human Resource Development

The Human Resource Development Department indicates the organisation's concern to improve staff capacities. It deals with personnel and administrative reforms, such as grades/wage structure, recruitment and promotion policies/staff appraisal techniques, and internal liaising between staff and management, and management and decision-makers.

Modalities for personnel promotion and staff appraisal are present concerns. Recruitment is only for management posts, as all field workers are drawn from the trainees. Preference is still given to internal candidates, but is now based on a new policy of supervisor ratings, peer and supervisee ratings, self-evaluations, a psychological profile, years of service and finally a selection panel's ratings. These measures are to ensure discipline and a fair and thorough system of promotions through fresh recruitment.

One senior management staff member said :

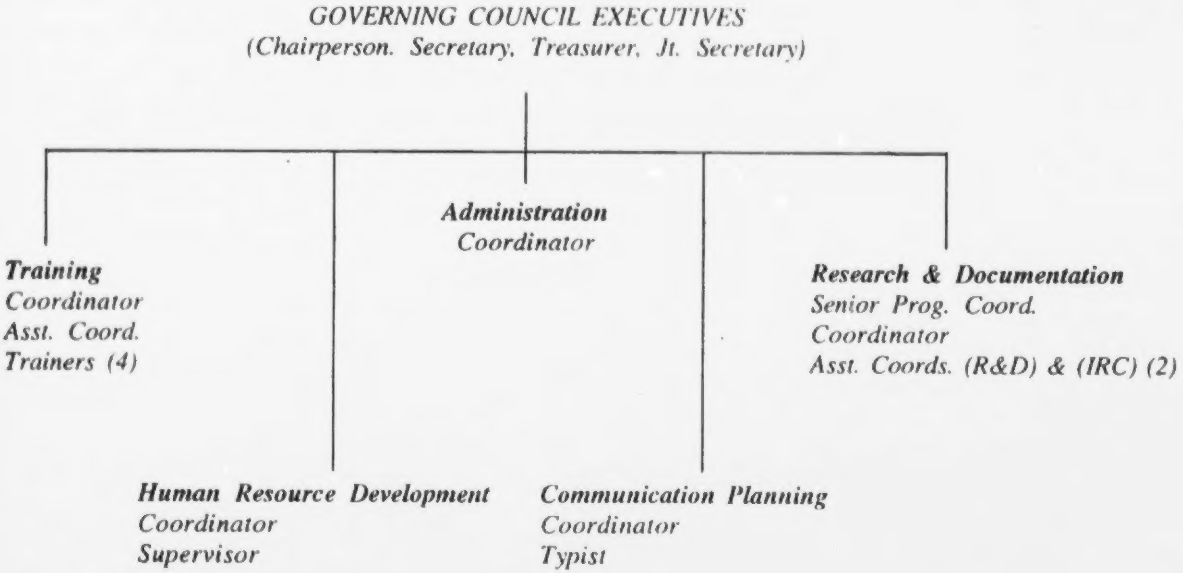
We have been automatically promoted from one grade to another grade, but we have to know what extra skills are required, first, if we have them, and second, whether we have the experience to use them on our own initiative... it's only when we feel independently competent about our job that we can perform our tasks well.

As yet however, there are few specific job tasks for the department.

We are expecting that this department, which has a specialist, would sit in on programme sub-committees, advise on the directions in which the programme content should go, help the staff develop their functional skills, and in the coordination of activities from the field site to the programme coordinator's level.

Fig.5 **ORGANOGRAM 3**

MOBILE CRECHES - INDIA


GOVERNING COUNCIL EXECUTIVES
(Chairperson. Secretary, Treasurer, Jt. Secretary)
Training
Coordinator
Asst. Coord.
Trainers (4)
Administration
Coordinator
Research & Documentation
Senior Prog. Coord.
Coordinator
Asst. Coords. (R&D) & (IRC) (2)
Human Resource Development
Coordinator
Supervisor
Communication Planning
Coordinator
Typist

The activities of the Human Resource Development Department dovetail with the training strategies, since much of the upgrading of the staff capacities relate to in-service training and attending training events of other organisations.

Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation

In the initial stages, the ad-hoc nature of the organisation's activities precluded any long-term planning, but it has come a long way since then. Financial plans are made on a yearly basis on the assumption of a certain level of income. Fortunately, the organisation has not really faced a serious scarcity of funds, primarily because its needs are simple, and there has been no grandiose expansion or cumbersome additional components. When the latter occurred and were not manageable, they were eliminated, in a manner similar to Adult Education and Vocational Education.

While the major programme of child care activities remains well-planned, the communities, especially in the settled colonies, are not drawn into the process of planning and implementation, even on an experimental basis, but there are reasons for this.

As one of the organisers said:

We tried to, but without success. In fact, we were advised not to get involved in community activities. Since we are an apolitical body, we did not wish to be constrained by the political leadership which could be quite hassling. The community does help informally, when we need their help...

Most of the time, the settled communities perceive the centres as places for looking after babies and helping older children prepare for schools. True, they come when they have problems, but their perceptions of the relationships between their homes and centres are not cohesive.

The attritioning of activities in the 80's in Delhi served further to distance the organisational activities from the community, so that the planning process was somewhat insular. As a result, data collected on the children, while meticulously recorded, especially in health and nutrition statistics, were not used as the basis for further planning, and are communicated mainly through verbal interactions. One of the departmental in-charges said:

We have no baseline data except a few scattered studies. Our only identification of the impact of our services is process data through informal discussions... Somehow, after ten years of this insulated situation, we have become aware that we need to do something systematic about the way we attain our goals...

The organisation became aware of this lacuna and has now initiated a supportive departmental infrastructure, one of its departments being Research and Documentation.

A typical year's programme in Research and Documentation 1993-94

1. Institute of Home Economics, Delhi : Survey of the socio-economic condition of families of construction workers, and therir awareness of health and education issues.

2. Lady Irwin College, Delhi : Financial incentives for continuing education - a study of the scholarship scheme of NGO in Delhi (Student dissertation).

3. School of Planning and Architecture, Delhi : Changing life patterns of women construction workers (Student dissertation).

4. TVAB Schoool of Habitat Studies, Delhi and Massachusetts Institute of Technology, USA : Strengthening communities : a project listing needs of the community and their understanding of possible solutions.

DOCUMENTATION

1. Matru Chhaya Part-1 : A manual for creche organisers Price Rs. 30.00 1000 copies Translation into English, Marathi and Gujarati (in process).

2. Matru Chhaya Part-2 : A manual for creche workers with user-friendly language and many illustrations (in process).

3. Preprimary Teaching Aids Kit : Kit of 18 items for teaching children 3-6 years old Price Rs. 600.00 with manual in Hindi.

4. Balwadi Manual : Guidelines for organising activities for balwadi children 6 booklets on specific themes (ongoing).

5. Module for Non-formal Education : Ongoing.

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Research and documentation

Professionals have been inducted to be in charge of :

* collation and cataloguing of reports and surveys

* information about the growth of the organisation

* preparation for a large research study on the migrant child and his/her family

* preparation of manuals and training information for dissemination among donors and allied organisations.

At present, the tasks are still to be systematised properly.

Currently we are involved in a backlog of work, in attempting to put the masses of data in order. This is not to say that the organisation has not worked on these aspects. There has been high quality work in print, in the videos, in the newsletter for its workers and in the countless reports of our interactions with other organisations. It is only that in the initial stages communication was embedded in an oral culture. Therefore, the major tasks now are retrieval, matching oral to written, analysing attendance records and registrations, collating previously collected data and information on the demographic profiles of clientele and field-level workers.

The organisation is aware of the need for moving from a traditional structure to a system in tune with the changing times. The business management approach now adopted is expected to help Mobile Creches to maintain itself, pay dividends in the long term and stabilise the provision of quality services for poor children. The ideology that human resource development is the basis of quality in the programme remains. It also indicates that quality will somehow beckon funds.

The organisation is aware of the need for moving from a traditional structure to a system in tune with the changing times to maintain itself, pay dividends in the long term and stabilise the provision of quality services for poor children.

7 TRAINING - FOR DEVELOPMENT

Mobile Creches is well-known for its unique "hands-on" training programme, and the most clearly profiled department is the Training Department. There are historical reasons for this. In the initial stages, there was much effort in consciously developing a quality in-service training programme. Later, greater attention was paid to pre-service training also, through participatory methods and continual guidance, innovating training methodology for all its cadres. Still later, the expertise developed was extended to others.

There are three kinds of training : (1) **balpalika** training (preservice); (2) **in-service** training for the staff; and (3) **extension** training for other organisations.

Balpalika training

Started experimentally as a two- or three-year internship model, the *balpalika* training is at present conducted for only one year. Trainees are :

* exposed to the ongoing programme, intensively guided and supervised throughout the training period.
* encouraged to experiment and to help in making practical decisions.
* guided to gradually take on responsibilities such as report maintenance and attendance.
* given the opportunity to conduct daily programmes independently.
* given access and opportunity for frequent discussions of tasks and improving them.
* guided towards care for the child in a holistic, integrated manner, and
* expected to be able to be able to effectively perform all types of tasks - washing, cleaning, bathing, nurturing and providing learning experiences for all age groups, right from babyhood to older ages.

Trainees are carefully screened : their aptitudes, interests, and motivation are observed in the first few days. More importantly, they screen themselves. Those without staying power drop out in the first few weeks. The essence of the training programme is its pragmatism and the inductive methodology, where theory is

Table 6 **Training completion rate**

Nos. admitted in Aug '92	30
Nos. successfully completed course in Sept '93	20
Nos. admitted in Oct '93	25
Nos. dropped out	12
Nos. as on 31-3-94	13

drawn from practice and forms only one-third of the curriculum. The whole training is carefully structured and supported to give it depth and innovative richness.

Each training programme is for a batch of 20-25 trainees, who are assigned to one centre each. The balpalika training is conducted by experienced trainers who are also skilled practitioners. The main method is supervised fieldwork supported by workshops in child health, education, nutrition, community cultural characteristics and social work, taught by specialists, many of whom are experienced supervisors who not only have a long tradition of knowledge of these areas, but have helped in evolving the training...

By the end of the training period, the trainee is well versed in understanding the socio-economic and cultural conditions and needs of working mothers from the poorer strata, in health, hygiene and child development, in administrative tasks, and the range of activities for children during the early childhood period. They are encouraged to use innovative and participatory methods, especially creative songs, dance, drama and drawings. (Appendix 3 gives a picture of the training system)

Performance is evaluated both by supervisor and self-ratings and performance at tests, but the work ethos, the team spirit, the willingness to take on multi-purpose tasks, the positive attitude towards doing things with children and encouraging them to be independent in a nurturing environment are intangibles, which are hard to measure.

Over the years, trainees have been partly absorbed by the organisation itself, or by other allied organisations. About one-third, however, do not take up child care work, and their follow-up is relatively poor. This raises the disturbing question of optimal use of the training.

Table 7 **Placement of trainees**

Nos. passed in 1992-93	**20**
Nos. employed Mobile Creches	**3**
Nos employed Kislay	**2**
Nos employed Arpana Ashram	**1**

We know we are training a number of them every year. Most of them keep in touch with us, some we do not know about. Maybe we ought to evolve an entrepreneurship element in our training so that those who wish to start on their own, may, with a little help, start small creches in their own communities. This means we have to evolve various models ... but now we only know the Mobile Creche model ... perhaps we ought to have refresher programmes for our trainers...

The Department of Education, Delhi Administration and the Central Board of Secondary Education have both been approached to seek recognition for this course as a vocational option at the +2 level. But, much greater awareness of day-care services is needed before courses with this practical approach become acceptable.

In-Service training

In-service training is the mechanism through which personnel can upgrade their knowledge and skills, and keep abreast of innovative ideas in the programme areas of health, education and child-care. In-service training is also the occasion for workshops that address problems of an organisational nature: maintaining good inter-personal relations with co-workers, dealing effectively with problems arising out of hierarchy and authority, accepting co-workers as fellow human beings with human failings, etc. Field workers are encouraged to demand training in areas of greatest felt need. This training is conducted by the Training Department and by resource persons from other organisations.

On-the-job training is carried out through a series of workshops and meetings. Workshops are held on issues relating to pre-school education, child care and child development. Apart from these, staff development forms an important issue. As 90% of the child care workers are women, topics relating to women's emancipation and status of women are taken up for discussions with them. Economic security is an important aspect of their existence, so various schemes relating to life insurance, savings certificates and provident fund loans are also discussed.

The system is unique in that the quality of the workers is always tuned to relate to new methods and different experiences, and has been systematically built into the organisational framework itself.

Extension training

An important area of training is extension training, in which the organisation regularly conducts courses for others. Mobile Creches' most visible link with the outer world is this extension training programme, which affords alliances with other organisations, helping in the advocacy role for underprivileged children and forging linkages. The specific aspects on which it concentrates are non-formal education for older children, health care, nutrition, child education and the organisation and administration of balwadis. Each course is tailor-made to suit the specific need of the concerned agency.

As one trainee puts it :

We get to know how others work. They motivate us to look at our work critically and bring about improvements. There are so many new things to learn... to modulate our training model to suit the needs of others.

Appendix 4 gives a sample of a typical year's extension training programmes and workshops.

8 THE PATTERN OF FINANCING

Another view of the organisation's work, its ethos and objectives, its struggles and solutions, can be obtained by looking at it from the financial angle. How does the organisation get and spend its money?

Income

The income of the organisation is from several sources - donor funds, the contractors at construction sites, government grants, collections from the community and a variety of fund-raising activities by the organisation itself.

Mobile Creches was largely responsible for initiating the Govt. of India's scheme of Creches for Children of Working/Ailing Mothers in 1974. Currently the contribution from the government is only 16.2% of the total funding, mainly because the components of the programme go far beyond what is envisaged in the scheme.

Today, six external and two national donors provide 46% of the total funding. Another 25% of the income is from contractors, sponsorship programmes and fund-raising activities in the country and abroad, while the rest comes from general donations and security deposits. The parents give a token fee of Re.1 for each child, a gesture adding up to less than 1% of the total income.

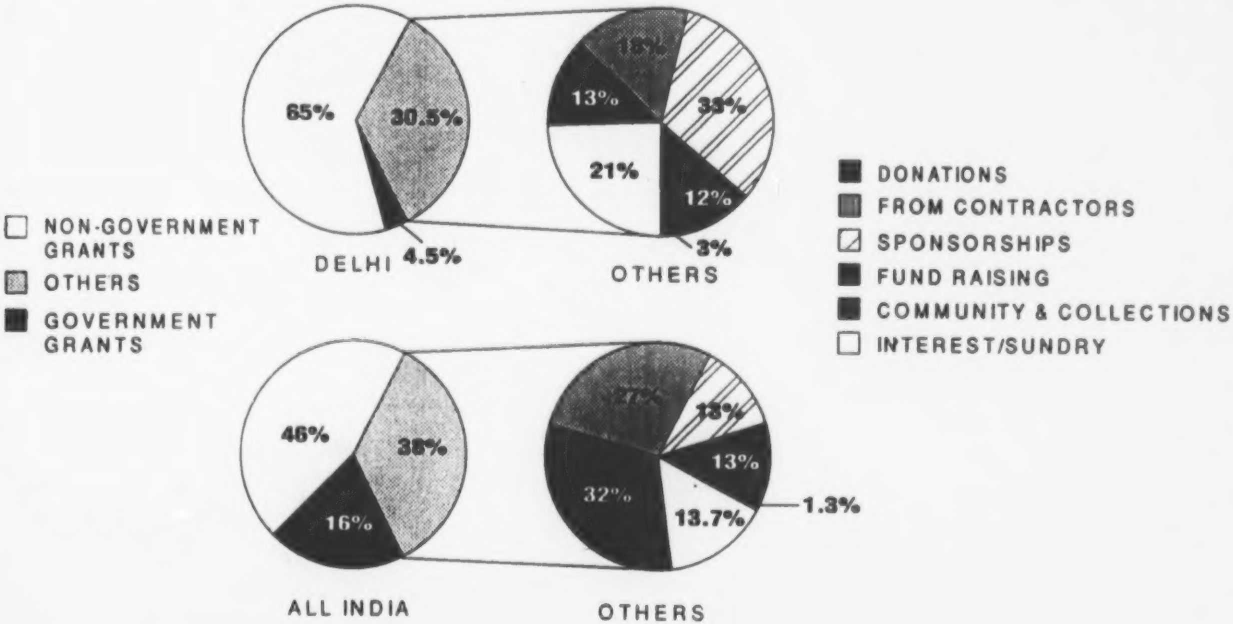
To attract funds, the organisation has separated some of its components for marketing to donors, and is attempting to build a corpus fund. This does not preclude, however, the anxiety familiar to most NGOs about the requirement of incoming funds.

The organisation is working on a strategy to raise indigenous funds and to reduce dependence on outside funds, mainly because its salary component of expenditure is increasing, and donors are reluctant to fund

Table 8 **Income 1993-94**

Heads	Delhi Branch	All India
	(Amount in lakhs of Rupees)	
Without cost of donated milk powder	56.69	119.81
Add cost of milk powder	2.88	8.84
Towards accounting adjustment	1.87	2.51
Total	61.44	131.16

Fig.6 : Breakdown of income in percentages



salaries. A typical year's fund-raising would include a benefit performance (film premiere, dance or music recital) and the sale of a product such as an address book, calendar or diary based on children's art work. In 1993-94, the main event was an exhibition of arts and crafts by the children. The organisation also receives 29 tonnes of full cream milk powder each year from Freres des Nos Freres (Switzerland).

Contractors at construction sites generally give a place to house the centre and pay one or two women workers from the labour force as helpers at Rs.800 per month per worker. Basic amenities provided are a makeshift toilet, a place to wash, electricity, and a kitchen-cum-storage space. They are also expected to give a sum of Rs.4000 per site for replacement of non-recurring and some recurring items, and 30% of the running costs per year for day care for the number of children on site.

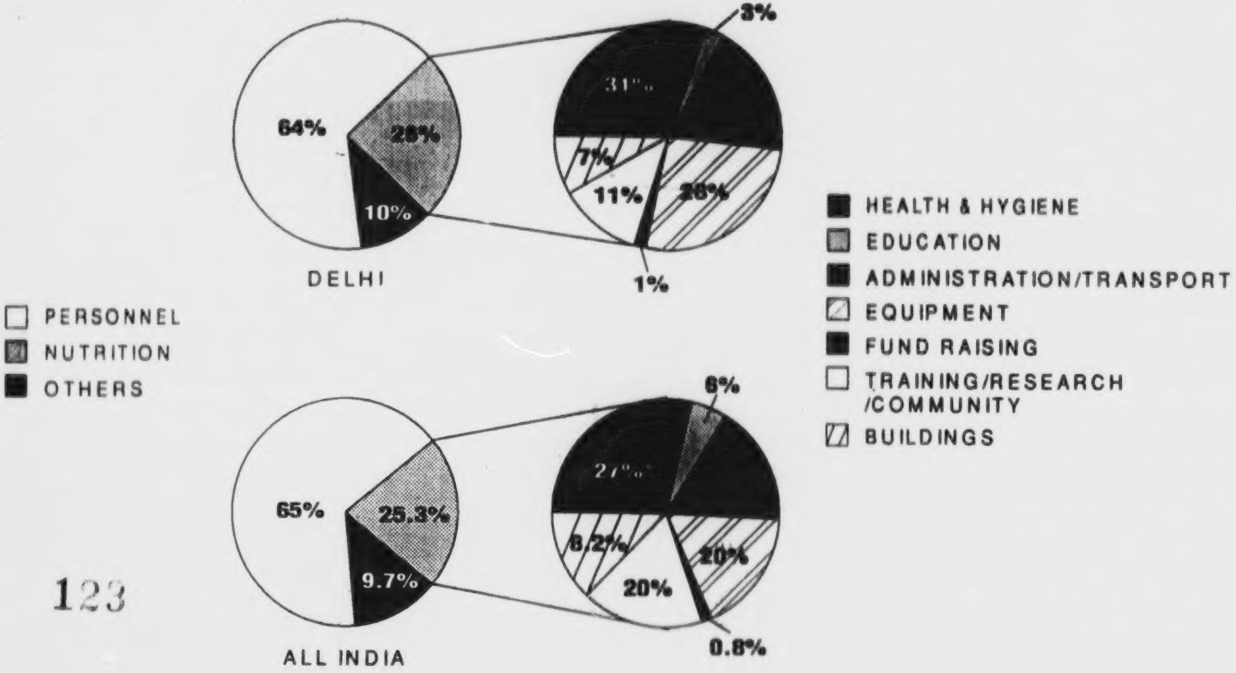
The resettlement/slum colonies centres are provided with space toilet/ electricity and water for the centre, and therefore are more expensive for the organisation. Thus, there is some feeling that concentration on construction sites is a financially sound proposition. Although the interaction with many of the contractors is not all that easy, in the last analysis they do contribute.

Table 9 **Contractors' contribution**

	Delhi Rs.	**All-India Rs.**
Total cost per child per year	2400	1692
Average no. of children on roll on construction site per month	700	2274
Total cash contribution of contractors per child per year	3.1 lakhs	8.3 lakhs
Cash contribution of contractors per child per year	44	360
Percentage of cost per child borne by contractors	19%	22%

Although the interaction with many of the contractors is not all that easy, in the last analysis they do contribute.

Fig.7 · Breakdown of expenditure in percentages



Expenditure

The cost per child (without the cost of milk powder) is Rs 8 per child per day (Rs 2400 per year) in Delhi, and Rs 5.6 per child in Bombay-Pune. (The cost per centre is found in Appendix 5) Salaries and benefits account for 65% of all expenditure. Nutrition takes up nearly 10%, with all other items together accounting for only a quarter of all expenditure. The relatively high cost figures hence reflect the mix of factors also responsible for the quality of the programme - the high staff-child ratio of 1:10 that is a unique characteristic of the organisation, the reasonable level of remuneration to workers, along with benefits and incentives for upward mobility, and the high manager/supervisor to staff ratio. This last factor is the direct outcome of the decision to stabilise the size at a certain level, which left a reserve of skilled field workers who then had to be otherwise redeployed. (Appendix 4 gives a picture of the present staffing pattern).

The question of sustainability

The unique quality of Mobile Creches is its ability to balance the human and programme components to ensure sustainability. Although it has no major assets except its office building, and funds will always be a matter of concern, many experienced hands do not foresee a crisis in the near future :

> *We have not had any major problems regarding the upkeep of the current status of services and personnel. True, costs are rising, but we expect to manage as we do every year.*

At the same time, the policy-makers are careful not to take on too much:

> *We think that we should have a small, cohesive service programme, one that we can manage...*

The organisation seems to be in a comfortable position to sustain its activities in the future, provided there is not too much expansion on major additional components.

Table 10 **Expenditure 1993-94**

Heads	Delhi Branch	All India
	(Amount in lakhs of Rupees)	
Without cost of donated milk powder	50.01	104.03
Add cost of milk powder	2.88	8.84
Towards accounting adjustment	1.87	2.51
Total	54.76	115.38

9 ADVOCACY AND NETWORKING

In the early years, the struggle for existence compelled the organisation to seek funds through philanthropic organisations. Its major approach was towards government, local and central, and to contractors on site, negotiating and lobbying for services for migrant workers. An informal advocacy approach developed into advocacy on a larger scale. Meera Mahadevan and her colleagues courageously approached the government and were chiefly instrumental in getting the Grant-in Aid for Creches for Working Mothers initiated in 1974. This scheme has now grown to cover assistance to several hundred organisations running over 12,000 creche units for nearly 3 lakh children all over the country. Yet the scheme is very far from Meera's dream of day care for the children of poor women struggling to earn a living.

The approach

The organisation continues to liase with various government departments, local authorities, educational institutions, specialists, volunteers and other NGOs. It has also actively participated in the preparation of government reports in planning for children by various Ministries, and cooperated in training programmes. It has reached out to a wider public through its EKALAVYA series of publications, greeting cards, art shows, television and video documentaries, and manuals on training programmes.

The major networking and advocacy has been through its extension training. From the beginning, advocacy, and later extension, have been seen not as mere training, but as a process of sharing experiences and insights, grappling with problems together, finding practical solutions, working together for the child.

As one of the early pioneers said:

Talking, persuading, doing — the days were too short, and the tasks too many. How could we turn around the situation for the children in our country? How could we reach more of them? What about factories? What about children of

The major networking and advocacy has been through its extension training. From the beginning, advocacy, and later extension, have been seen not as mere training, but as a process of sharing experiences and insights.

weavers and of women on plantations? We went to Ahmedabad, we went to Pune, we went to Kanpur, trying to find groups to take on the work, involve themselves – trying to find employees who would come forward and participate. We had learnt a lot about day care, about what skills and attitudes were needed, about systems and about children in poverty situations. We wanted to share, help others to get started, sit with them and identify strategies. Our extension training grew out of these explorations. Being practical people, this was the way we saw for advocacy — not in seminar rooms, not writing papers, but out there in the field.

But this is not the whole story. Mobile Creches has assisted in forming a Task Force of the Indian Business Leaders' Forum with NGO partnership and has begun a dialogue. Meetings with architects and structural engineers have led to pledges of support. Officials at the National Building Construction Corporation (NBCC) have set up mechanisms to sort out problems on site.

So much needs to be done in the totality of care for underprivileged children ... we realise we need to join hands with organisations that have the same cause...

Networking

In 1989, soon after the publication of SHRAM SHAKTI, (the report of the National Commission on Women in the Unorganised Sector), Mobile Creches, together with the Self-Employed Women's Association (SEWA), took the initiative to set up an apolitical loose network of concerned organisations to lobby and act as a pressure group for day care for the young children of poor women. This network, which calls itself the Forum for Creche and Child Care Services (FORCES), has three basic demands:

- inclusion of child care in the Minimum Needs Programme
- setting up of a National Creche Fund and
- reserving a fixed proportion of GNP for the care and development of young children below the poverty line.

Mobile Creches was Co-Convenor, together with the Centre for Women's Development Studies (CWDS) of FORCES, and since 1993 is the Convenor. A national workshop was held in 1993 to press for these demands, and early in 1994, a National Creche Fund was announced by the government. FORCES is continuing a dialogue on the best ways by which the Fund can be utilised for the cause of the underprivileged child.

It is necessary to network ... if we want to keep our image going in the cause of children of poor working mothers... and also to be able to attract funds and assistance in upgrading our skills.

Communication and planning

The Communication and Planning Department was created to systematically plan strategies to attract funding, to communicate with donors (according to their specialised reporting systems and their mandates), to organise events for local funds, and to give the organisation a growing profile through networking, liaising and coordination of activities.

We need to look into our future needs for funds. Our funding system needs to be revamped in view of the escalating recurring expenditure, and the large personnel cadres we have to support, since most of them are permanent workers. We also have to devise ways of dividing our programme into components that would seem attractive to donors. For instance, our sponsorship programme has the potential to grow. We also require to have a clear picture of legal issues, especially with refererence to administration.

The organisation continues to dialogue with the contractors on sites, most of whom who are favourably disposed to the model. The settled community that it serves has to be drawn into its orbit, not so much in doing things for the community, but especially in getting the communities to participate and contribute in kind for the services and to feel a sense of responsibility and ownership.

It is necessary to network ... if we want to keep our image going in the cause of children of poor working mothers... and also to be able to attract funds and assistance in upgrading our skills.

10 EPILOGUE

The organisation has been successful in retaining and working towards the objectives that it had set out for itself. The main concern is the provision of holistic services for children of the poor, especially migrant labourers. This is being achieved by establishing an *espirit de corps* among fieldworkers, creating a cadre of middle-level management and an institutionalized system as well as interacting with the community. Creating linkages with other organisations and training personnel are the *forte* of Mobile Creches and is largely responsible for its growing strength and effectiveness.

The possibility of replication

There are varying perceptions about the future role of the organisation. Some staunch supporters claim:

Our training programme will continue to extend the model for those who wish to replicate the type of programme we have.

The same sentiment is echoed by those who say:

We have trained balpalikas... and we hope that they can set up small-scale creches like ours in their communities.

There are those who believe in involving the community, and leaving the responsibility to the zonal centre:

We hope that the zones will form mobile centres, train local people to run creches that could be community-based, so as to reach a larger number of people. We believe in women's entrepreneurship... and could help local women create mobile preschool programmes.

Members are also confident that the urban model could be modified to suit rural needs and hope to expand the ideology and practice of Mobile Creches to reach any community in need of such services. Mobile Creches has chosen to remain small and vibrant for the present, strengthening its model for others to replicate.

At the same time, its roles of model and mentor will inspire and guide many other individuals and organisations to carry on the services through out the length and breadth of the country in the future.

Mobile Creches has chosen to remain small and vibrant for the present, strengthening its model for others to replicate.

Appendix 1

COMMUNITY OUTREACH

Mothers' Meetings

The primary purpose of mothers' meetings is to create a greater awareness among mothers on important issues relevant to them. They take a keen interest in these meetings and enjoy the opportunity to discuss their views freely. It also provides a platform to develop understanding of problems common to the community. Every effort is made to use their idiom and language to facilitate better communication. At least one meeting every month is held in each centre and 25 - 30 women on an average attend each meeting.

Topics discussed include:

- Importance of education and admission into municipal schools
- Benefits of nutritious food
- Seasonal diseases
- Superstition
- Information on Mobile Creches
- Festivals
- Cleanliness of self and environment
- Immunisation
- Simple home remedies
- Anaemia
- Family planning
- Care of pregnant and lactating mothers

Camps for women labourers

In 1993-94, as in previous years, a 2-day camp was organised at Haridwar, in which a total of 45 mothers took part. Of these, 33 were from construction sites and 12 from resettlement colonies/slums. The aim of this camp was to give an opportunity to the mothers to help build a higher self-image and a sense of self-worth, in an environment removed from the exhaustion of a typical day of hard labour.

The contractors provided monetary support for the camp and the mothers also contributed Rs. 60 per head. Prior to their departure for Haridwar, the Mobile Creches' theatre group, Lok Doot, presented a play on superstitions. The women enjoyed it very much and participated with enthusiasm in the discussion held after the performance. They appreciated visiting the religious spots and temples of Rishikesh and Haridwar, an opportunity not ordinarily available to most of them.

Lok Doot

The educational theatre troupe has a repertoire of over 30 plays on issues of concern to the community. The plays, often based on real life situations, use folk music, dance, mime and movement, as well as traditional folk forms like *kavad, phad* and puppets.

In 1993-94, there were 28 performances on construction sites and resettlements. Themes included early marriage, alcoholism, communicable diseases, dowry, AIDS, literacy, gender bias, superstition, health/hygiene and civic rights and obligations.

Appendix 2

SELECTED STUDIES ON MOBILE CRECHES

1. Anandlakshmy, S., Seth, Dipali and Rahimitula, Yasmin (1979) Census study of children in Mobile Creches, Delhi – a demographic profile EKALAVYA Mobile Creches, Delhi
2. Balgopal, I. (1987) In the shadow of the scaffolding : a study of migrant construction workers Mobile Creches, Bombay
3. Bridgeland, K. (1975) Voluntary community action for migrant building workers – an evaluation University of Edinburgh (Mimeo)
4. Datta, Ayna (1994) A study of women construction workers School of Planning and Architecture, Delhi (unpublished dissertation)
5. Gopalan, P. (1980) Demographic profile of three Bombay slums EKALAVYA Mobile Creches, Delhi
6. Kuhran - Neumarker, Dorothea (1990) Karma und Caritas - Mobile Creches Dieckstr Publications Hamburg Germany
7. Mahadevan, I. (1979) Census study of children in Mobile Creches, Bombay EKALAVYA Mobile Creches, Delhi
8. Mahadevan, M. (1977) Face to face with poverty – the Mobile Creches in India PROSPECTS Quarterly Review of Education Vol. 7 No.4
9. Mahadevan, M. (1978) :India's Mobile Creches: an imaginative experiment in child care UNESCO Courier No.5
10. Mathani, Rajeshree (1971) Mobile Creches for working mothers' children Indian Institute of Management, Ahmedabad
11. Ranade, S.N. (1980) Women construction workers of Delhi Delhi School of Social Work
12. Seth, M. and Mathur, S. (1994) Financial incentive for continuing education: study of the scholarship scheme of an NGO in Delhi Unpublished dissertation Lady Irwin College, University of Delhi, Delhi
13. Swaminathan, M. and Singh, D. (1985) A continuing experiment: the story of Mobile Creches MANUSHI No.29 Delhi
14. A survey of three construction sites in Delhi (author and year not known)
15. Micro studies in three centres (1978) Annual Report Mobile Creches, Bombay

3. *Conceptualization* : field experiences are related to theoretical concepts and frames through workshop discussions using participatory methods. Problem-solving is a crucial area of training in management and administration, as well as learning to handle progressively more complex tasks.

The characteristics of the model are:

- linkage to extensive field programmes
- on-the-job apprenticeship and internship
- experiential, pragmatic and participatory methods using the inductive approach, with high response to a variety of situations.

Appendix 3

TRAINING FOR DAY-CARE WORKERS

When Mobile Creches was launched in 1969, the concept of day-care was new. The tasks at that time were:

- acceptance of children with poor hygiene and disease
- relating with dignity and on par with illiterate parents
- learning to wash, tend, bathe and feed soiled or sick children
- long hours of work in primitive conditions, low pay and hardships.

Mobile Creches had to develop its own training programme, which it did at first through group discussions to tackle problems, out of which grew the problem-solving ability that is extremely sharp today.

Gradually, resource people and specialists came to offer their services to build up knowledge and skills – multi-disciplinary and pragmatic. The field was the reference ground, a dialogue between specialists and workers, leading to an inductive process of training.

Pattern of training

Recruits are placed for a month at operating centres with 'hands-on' experience, closely supervised and monitored by trained supervisors. Workshop sessions dovetail theory, depending upon the ability, background and education of the trainees.

Training cadres

The trainer/supervisor carries the bulk of training, supported by resource personnel. The trainers are themselves being constanly retrained by their long and continued field exposure. Their skills are constantly upgraded by experts and resource people, especially in the conduct and management of field programmes.

Methodology

Three stages of training have been identified :

1. *Orientation* : for aptitude, by exposure to field work and observation of abilities and interests (6 weeks - 3 months)
2. *Experience* : a gradual induction into wider functions, responsibility, and accountability, through experiential learning and role modelling of the more experienced workers.

Appendix 4

EXTENSION TRAINING WORKSHOPS - DELHI 1993 - 94

S. No.	Name of Agency	Subject	Duration	Participants
1.	ANKURAN Delhi	Pre-natal and post-natal child development	1 day	40 balwadi teachers
2.	AIWC All India Women's Conference Kanpur	Exploratory visit	3 days	M.C.team and representatives of 6 Kanpur-based organisations
3.	SHARE Society for Holistic Action in Rehabilitation and Ecology Manali	Balwadi training	7 days	12 balwadi teachers
4.	SIDH Society for Integrated Development of Himalayas Mussoorie	Balwadi training	12 days	47 balwadi teachers and supervisors
5.	AIWC All-India Women's Conference Kanpur	Community communication and free play activity	7 days	12 teachers and supervisors
6.	VIHAN Society for Child Development and Education in Rajasthan, Jaipur	Balwadi training	5 days	36 teachers and supervisors
7.	SEWA Self-Employed Women's Association Ahmedabad	Creche training (Phase II)	7 days	35 teachers and supervisors

8.	ARPANA ASHRAM Karnal	Number concept and language development	3 days	20 teachers and supervisors
9.	SEWA Self-Employed Women's Association Ahmedabad	Creche training (Phase II)	7 days	23 teachers and supervisors
10.	SCARP Society for Community Action Research Programmme, Delhi	Physical development of infants	2 days	19 teachers
11.	VIHAN Society for Child Development and Education in Rajasthan, Jaipur	Activities to build creativity in children	7 days	27 teachers and supervisors
12.	BALSAHYOG Delhi	Informal methods of teaching. Principles of child development	3 days	17 teachers and supervisors
13.	CHIRAG Centre for Himalayan Rural Action Group, Nainital	Exploratory visit	7 days	12 teachers and supervisors
14.	NIPCCD National Institute for Public Cooperation and Child Development, Delhi	Community communication	3 days	26 Programme Officers
15.	DCCW Delhi Council for Child Welfare, Delhi	Environmental Studies	1 day	27 aanganwadi workers
16.	ARPANA ASHRAM Karnal	Conduct of mothers' meeting	3 days	20 teachers
17.	DCCW Delhi Council for Child Welfare, Delhi	Child Development	2 days	34 aanganwadi workers

Appendix 5

COST PER CENTRE 1993 - 94

	Delhi	Bombay-Pune
Average no. of centres	24	30
Average no. of children per centre	70	87
Cost per centre per annum in rupees		
Salaries	1,12,500	84,600
Benefits & allowances		
- Staff welfare	3,750	2,100
- Conveyance	5,420	12,600
- Provident Fund	8,540	6,300
- Gratuity	2,230	1,660
Nutrition*	21,040	16,760
Medical Programme		
- Doctors, honorarium	4,580	3,660
- Medicines	5,830	1,660
Education	1,450	3,530
General Care & Hygiene	6,450	4,430
Administration	7,290	3,200
Transport / Travel	2,910	3,200
Equipment (Maintenance and replacement)	1,500	1,060
Community Communication		
- Lok Doot	2,080	300
- Labour Camp	416	—
Maintenance of buildings	4,160	1,360
Total	1,90,146	1,46,420

* Not inclusive of milk powder costs

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Appendix 6

STAFF PATTERN - DELHI 1993-94

Field Staff		
Day care workers	:	80
In-charges	:	24
Zonal in-charges	:	4
Helpers (part-time) •	:	11
Helpers (from contractors) •	:	12
Supervisors	:	12
Assistant Zonal Programme Officers	:	4*
Zonal Programme Officers	:	4*
Assistant Coordinators (Administration and Programme)	:	2*
Coordinators (Administration and Programme)	:	2*
Sub-total		132
Office		
Administration head	:	7
Secretarial services	:	3
Accounts personnel	:	3*
Supply Assistant Coordinators	:	1*
Supply helpers	:	3
Supply personnel (part-time)	:	1
Maintenance personnel	:	1*
Drivers	:	3
Carpenter	:	1
Watchman	:	2
Helpers (other)	:	2
Gardener (part-time)	:	1
Sub-total		22
Total	:	164**

• Helpers are appointed on a part-time basis in the permanent centres while on construction sites the contractor provides helpers from his labour force.

* Have worked in the field earlier

** Ten staff are assigned to the national body, including coordinators and secretaries.

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The SURAKSHA series documents innovative programmes of Early Childhood Care and Education in India, especially those which address the intersecting needs of women, young children and girls. Carefully researched and written by scholars in the field, each study looks in depth at one programme, highlighting its achievements, philosophy and goals. The series as a whole represents the rich diversity of experience within the country, with a range in terms of geography, auspices and organisational pattern. Scholars and students of Child Development and child welfare would find the series an invaluable source of information, as well as policy makers, voluntary agencies and others concerned with programming for women's and children's development.

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SURAKSHA
Early Childhood Care and Education in India

LITTLE SCHOOL ON THE HILL

Child Education in Community Development

Vasudha Joshi

SIDH, Mussoorie

PS 024132

The SURAKSHA Series

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SURAKSHA

Early Childhood Care and Education in India

Volume 3

LITTLE SCHOOL ON THE HILL

Child Education in Community Development

by

Vasudha Joshi

Monograph Series No. 3
M.S. Swaminathan Research Foundation
Madras

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The SURAKSHA series was initiated with the support of the Aga Khan Foundation (India).

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- the agencies, who have participated wholeheartedly in the process of documentation and helped to maintain the balance between objective reporting and passionate involvement.

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and

- the many others, all of whom it is not possible to list, for their constant support which made this series possible.

FOREWORD

Every human being ultimately is the product of interaction between the genotype (inherent genetic make up) and the environment. While heredity determines potential, the home, health and educational environment determine whether young children bloom or remain "blossoms in the dust". There is a well-known saying - *as the twig is bent, so the branch will grow.* It is in this context that Early Childhood Care and Education assume critical significance with reference to giving the child an enabling environment for the full expression of his/her innate potential for physical and mental development

I am happy that through the SURAKSHA series of publications, a careful chronicling of the many excellent examples of Early Childhood Care and Education in India is being undertaken. This series will enable scholars and researchers as well as policy makers and practitioners to learn from the rich diversity of experience available within our country in this field. Such an understanding is fundamental to learning from successes and thereby helping to replicate effective and economically viable models of day care.

This series has been lovingly put together and is the result of close cooperation among the many people who have worked hard on it. On behalf of the Foundation, I must particularly thank the members of the Advisory Committee, who have given unsparingly of their time and effort, the distinguished scholars who have written the case studies, the agencies whose work has been documented and the Aga Khan Foundation (India) for their support.

M. S. Swaminathan

M.S. Swaminathan

EDITOR'S NOTE

The SURAKSHA series has grown from an idea which has been germinating for a long time. Scholars have long felt the need for documentation of Early Childhood Education Care and Education programmes in India. While there has been a wealth of experience in the country, with many small-scale experiments under the leadership of outstanding thinkers and educational leaders, it has been realised that hardly any of it has been recorded for a wider public.

The vast diversity in the situations of women and children in the country implies that child care services, especially day care, would vary widely in response to local and specific needs. At the same time, programmes for young children, by their very nature must be highly personalised, direct, small in scale, and rooted in local culture and relationships. Diversity and responsiveness to needs are hence an essential characteristic of successful programmes for young children. In the last two decades, with the rapid expansion of child care programmes like the Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) in the State sector, it has become all the more important to draw the attention of policy makers to the importance of the flexibility and responsiveness represented by these multiple approaches. Documentation has thus emerged as an essential tool for advocacy.

It was with the twin objectives of dissemination and advocacy that Project ACCESS embarked in 1993, with the support of the Aga Khan Foundation (India), on the project entitled **Multiple Approaches in ECCE in India**, with a view to bringing out a series of studies documenting innovative approaches to ECCE in India. Dr.T.S.Saraswati, Head, Department of Human Development and Family Studies, M.S. University of Baroda, who has for long been urging the need for such documentation, was an incomparable guide and adviser in launching the project. With the help of an Advisory Committee consisting of distinguished representatives from several disciplines, ranging from Child Development and Education to Management and Women's Studies, criteria were drawn up for

••

selection of programmes to be included in the series and procedures were developed for a participatory process of documentation.

The series of case-studies represents a wide range of experiences in terms of geography, auspices and structure. The locations range from the Himalayan region to the coastal South, from industrial metropolis to rural or tribal hamlets. The programmes are run by diverse institutions — voluntary agencies, trade unions, educational institutions and women's groups. The programmes include spontaneous private efforts as well as statutory obligations and government / non-government partnerships; they are employer-funded and union-sponsored, school-based or community based. The common element is a commitment to address the intersecting needs of women, young children and girls. In addition, each programme is need-based, client-oriented and responsive, a system of optimal size with a minimum life of three years, caters to lower socio-economic groups and is non-profit making in nature. The series title SURAKSHA was chosen for its rich resonance implying an all-embracing, nurturant care, visually represented in the logo; while the colour of each cover is intended to evoke the specific geographical context.

The process of developing the studies has been a participatory one, involving a researcher/writer working closely with the agency concerned, and providing opportunities for sharing and mutual learning among the agencies through a network and occasional meetings. The studies are process-oriented in nature and not merely descriptive, focussing both on the unique features and the replicable aspects of each programme, finances, sustainability, the child care worker, the organisational structure and relevant linkages. The concluding part in each case dwells on implications of the programme for wider policy initiatives for young children. An overview of the economics of child care is expected to follow the last study in the series.

This study explores, in depth, the process of developing an educational model appropriate to remote and sparsely populated hill areas, a territory where schools may often be too far for the very young to reach on foot. Told as a compelling personal narrative rich in anecdotal evidence, the case study documents the experiences of two young people equipped with a conscious educational philosophy, some practical skills and the vision and determination to use education as the entry point for development in a backward Himalayan region. WIth disarming candour, using the words of its principal actors and of teachers, parents and village people, it records both the strengths and the weaknesses of the approach, the distant goals and the day-to-day difficulties, the achievements and the failures, the insights and the hindsights. The author's voice is heard only on the last page.

At the end, a clear picture emerges of a viable, attainable educational model encompassing both child care and early primary education, and of the steps, the support structures and services needed to achieve it – a picture with far-reaching policy implications. In a situation where such significant small-scale experiments are liitle known even to other professionals in the field, a wider audience for this story could well become the starting point for policy debates and discussions which could trigger off educational renewal in some of the most backward regions.

March 1995

Mina Swaminathan
Series Editor

LITTLE SCHOOL ON THE HILL

CHILD EDUCATION IN COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

……

ABOUT THIS VOLUME

The Author

Vasudha Joshi, who has a Master's in the Sociology of Education from the Institute of Education in London, has worked in a variety of settings – running a bookshop, researching and reporting for television and campaigning with pressure groups. She lives in Calcutta and makes documentary films.

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1 HOW IT ALL BEGAN

The concept

SIDH, the organisation, was set up by Anuradha Joshi and Pawan Gupta in 1989. Anuradha had taught for several years in a Montessori nursery school and later on as a primary school teacher in Calcutta. Pawan had worked as an engineer in the corporate world. Both were dissatisfied with the limitations of their professional lives. Anuradha felt that social welfare work would provide her with a meaningful involvement in her work. Pawan concurred and they both decided to set up SIDH together. The aim of SIDH is integrated community development on a path of self-sustenance, and a great deal of emphasis has been placed on the development of human resources in the local community, with the hope that at some point it will be possible for local people to run their own programmes without outside help.

For Anuradha, the pre-primary school programme in SIDH brings together three influences which have had a profound effect on her world view - the Montessori method, Gandhi's emphasis on manual labour, and the *vipassana* technique of meditation, which believes that any meaningful change towards self-sustenance can be achieved only with an accompanying change within the individual - a shift from *kripa* (benevolence of organisations, the state, God) to *karya* (the individual working out his/her own salvation, without blame or dependence on others).

It was in 1976 that she first encountered Madame Montessori's writings, and discovered a new respect for children: for them all activity is play, there is no split between pleasurable play and work. Learning through play and the use of sensorial materials to stimulate the boundless curiosity of the child were useful as techniques, she found, but what was equally if not more important was the stress on 'freedom', which translates operationally as self-sufficiency, and for her, is the key term that links together the three 'ideological' influences on her and her work. At the level of the individual child, freedom (self-sufficiency) means to be able to take decisions, and to be less dependent on adults. In the pre-primary schools, or the balwadis, this is promoted through '*swatantra khel*' (independent play) and teaching a child to take care of him/herself by learning to clothe and wash himself etc. (Exercises in Practical Life)

Anuradha believes there is a continuity between these aims of the programme which deal with the child and the larger aims of the community programme, which are working towards the same objectives of self-sufficiency, independence and sustainability. For her , the crucial link is the change in attitude - from *kripa* to *karya* - which can be facilitated through meditation which emphasises freedom and individual effort. The activities in the balwadi reflect these different influences: *shanthi khel* (silence activity) is inspired by *vipassana*, the stress on *vyavaharik karya* (exercises in practical life) by Gandhi's reflections on manual labour, and the emphasis on sensorial materials is an outcome of her exposure to Montessori methods.

The choice of Jaunpur

They arrived in Mussoorie in 1989 (why Mussoorie? The answer may lie in the many years Anuradha spent there as a child, or her origins from the neighbouring Kumaon hills, or both) and started visiting Jaunpur - a tribal block which has been denied the status of a government-approved tribal area. (Appendix 1 gives details of Jaunpur) They visited several villages in the Jaunpur block to ascertain their needs and demands. What emerged clearly from these exploratory surveys was the need for primary schools in the villages - a need, several villages articulated as their demand. So SIDH started the first school in Bhediyan village in March 1989. Employing only local people, familiar with the language and customs of Jaunpur, created initial obstacles because of the low literacy rate in the area. Finally, 4 boys who had passed Class 10 were selected and provided intensive training, before they opened two other schools in August and December that year.

A Jaunpuri homestead

The balwadi programme

It was within six months of starting the school programme, that Anuradha and Pawan felt the need for a pre-primary school initiative. The 8-9 year olds brought their younger brothers and sisters, who were under their care, to the schools. This was creating problems for the teacher and disrupting the schoolroom. Alternatively they would stay home to look after them, which was self-defeating for the project. This was the first perceived need for the balwadi programme.

Only after Pawan got a fellowship from SRUTI, Mahila Samakhya came up with a grant for a women's programme, SAMTA (Chakrata) offered to help with a stipend for the trainees and Uttarakhand Seva Nidhi offered support for balwadis and toilet construction, was it possible for SIDH to start working on balwadis from May 1990. This was a project that Anuradha was very enthusiastic about, as she was convinced that Montessori's method 'works' in practice and is invaluable as a tool for developing the potential of the child and the teacher.

The balwadi programme ties in with their objective of community development - as Anuradha puts it "the dream of a model village". She argues that the impact of a balwadi on the children is profound, leading to long-term change in attitudes to work, encouraging independence and concentration, and inculcating 'desirable' habits like using toilets, and cleanliness, which improve personal hygiene. Anuradha now sees it as the nucleus of their community development programmes. The access which the balwadi provides to mothers in the village, makes it possible to bring up related areas in the fields of health and nutrition, through *mahila dals* and other initiatives, such as introducing new crops and agricultural inputs; opening a nursery in the village and introducing appropriate technology and credit schemes. In the long term, she feels, balwadis can become a new community development model, inexpensive and yet appropriate, for the small and scattered hill villages.

For children all activity is play,
there is no split between pleasurable play and work.

……………………………………………

2 THE PROGRAMME GROWS

The development of the balwadi programme can be divided into five phases.

The first phase: May 1990 – Sept. 1990 - Beginnings

The first thing done by Anuradha and Krishna, the first member in SIDH, was to go and visit the balwadi training programme in Laxmi Ashram in Kausani. This exposed them to how balwadis were being run in rural hill areas with a group having a low literacy level. Feeling reasonably confident, they came back to Mussoorie to initiate the programme. They contacted and selected 8 young girls in villages who had passed Class 4 and 5 and were interested in volunteering their services and organised an in-house training programme. Here they concentrated on basic play methods for teaching: singing, dancing, telling stories and making up songs in Jaunpuri on numbers and days of the week. This resulted in an audio cassette of environmental songs for children and a book of songs and stories. (Appendix 2 gives details about teaching/learning materials developed by SIDH.) It was after this orientation course that four new balwadis were begun in villages where they had set up schools already.

Training sessions were also organised by SIDH to gear up for opening new balwadis in villages they had not worked in before. The trainees were familiarised with basic survey methods, how to interact with the villagers and consult the village women on whether they felt the need for a balwadi and the possibility of making the balwadi the nodal point for the *mahila dal* programme in the village. Each girl was asked to choose five villages and do an informal survey. As the decision to open new balwadis was constrained by the areas the girls were from, balwadis were opened in six more villages.

The sessions introduced play materials adapted from Montessori methods, such as number rods, sandpaper figures for sensorial development, methods of playing with water, silence activity to encourage concentration, sound boxes, counting games with matchboxes etc. and incorporated the informal chat sessions learnt from Laxmi Ashram. The balwadi teacher was exposed to the world outside her village and a familiar hill environment with women trainers and the warmth and affection shown to them was a reassuring introduction.

The second phase: Nov. 1990 – July 1991 - Training

In this phase there was intensive training organised for the balwadi teachers which had to be repeated every three months. This involved developing new toys from low cost materials and a lot of the same ground had to be covered and repeated again because of a high turnover of the girls in the first year, and the time involved in clarifying concepts. Also, teaching through play is much more difficult and demanding than the rote methods used generally in schools.

> *I remember the first training programme. I thought what a waste of time - how you pick up an object, how you keep it back. Why should we learn such things? I thought the children can do it anyhow - folding clothes for instance.*
>
> – Pavitra Rawat, Talogi Balwadi.

> *I think I have learnt a lot through the trainings – things I wouldn't pay attention to earlier. Then you discover how much the children copy you – if I take off my slippers outside the classroom, then they do the same. How you do something is important because they are observing you, how you handle a glass or a slate.* – she says today.

This was the period when SIDH was very keen on doing a training film – to cut down on the intensive labour involved. A workshop was organised with other NGOs and funding organisations to explore the possibility; but the consensus appeared to be that it was area-specific and too expensive a proposition for the benefits that emerged. The workshop did have other beneficial side-effects though - it got together a number of people experienced in balwadis, and as a result of the discussions during the workshop, Anuradha felt her understanding of the concept and potential of balwadis as a tool for community participation developed.

Apart from the regular training sessions, there were monthly meetings of all the balwadi teachers closely monitored by Anuradha and/or the Balwadi supervisor. They mainly focussed on determining the absenteeism of the teachers, apart from the drop-out rate in balwadis which still remains the primary indicator of how successful the balwadi is. Teachers attempting to bribe children to the balwadi by offering sweets and sugar had to be dealt with. These sessions by Anuradha were directive, with little participation by the trainees.

Third phase: Aug 1991 - May 1992 Support materials

Training sessions continued but it went beyond the basic ground covered in the first year. They included sessions on the difference between a school and a balwadi, and a balwadi and home, the reason for the different methods employed, the world view of a child and how to build on the natural curiosity a child has about the world, how to create the ideal atmosphere for a child, and how the balwadi can be used as a base to raise other questions/issues in the village.

The material used in this phase of training has been published as a booklet - *Hamari Balwadi,* which also has a section on developing low-cost play materials which they had worked on in their sessions, and adapting the teaching aids, so they could make them themselves at a lower cost, or get the Class 3, 4 and 5 schoolchildren to make them as part of craft classes. Subsequently SIDH organised a training session with Mobile Creches in Delhi, who held a workshop on the teaching aids they had developed using inexpensive materials.

In this phase they also decided to incorporate traditional teaching methods - chart reading by rote, for example, primarily as a response to the villagers, who were disapproving of 'so much singing and dancing and no teaching', but subsequently found that they can be useful too. Reading something aloud does make for familiarity and pleasure for the child. The groups now spend upto a maximum of 10 minutes a day on rote learning and it usually follows a small group/independent play session or demonstration. (Appendix 3 gives the daily time-table)

Further, during this period, a training of trainers (TOT) workshop was organised with the help of Radha Bhatt from Laxmi Ashram, Kausani, and this led on to the next phase, where the teachers gradually and then more confidently took on the task of training others.

The fourth phase: Sept. 1991 – Oct. 1992 - Consolidation

The fourth phase was of consolidation, and increase in balwadi trainers, who made rapid progress in this stage. Demonstrations of teaching methods were held in the villages to explain how children were being taught. Regular Parent - Teacher meetings were held and experimenting with teaching aids continued.

The balwadi teachers were particularly enthusiastic about the doll's house that was demonstrated at Mobile Creches. Some new games – *seema gyan* – the boundary game, which then became part of the balwadi curriculum, were also suggested. This training also had a special component to train illiterate women and as a result it brought in several older women to join the programme - ten of them joined the sessions, of whom three are today actively part of the programme as assistant *sahayikas* in balwadis.

This period also saw the women make several trips outside to Delhi etc which was valuable exposure for them. They tried out educational toys that had been produced by the Centre for Learning Resources in Ahmedabad, but found them expensive. Several aids in the area of health produced by Voluntary Health Association of India (VHAI) were used, and other inputs like animal husbandry

Learning together

Learn while you play

and mushroom growing were brought up as possibilities for income generation.

Branching out

The major achievement in this period was the development of more participatory methods of training and the building of a strong and confident team successfully able to impart training to others, and to constantly work on new improvements and innovations in their own programmes. They have helped training sessions in Laxmi Ashram, Kausani, the Bhuvaneshwari Mahila Ashram, the Mussoorie Gramin Vikas Samiti, and the IAS Academy in Mussoorie and also held a training workshop for a women's development organisation in Delhi.

The other major change in this period was structural reorganisation within SIDH. Till May 1992, the balwadi programme along with the *mahila dal* programme was under a separate supervisor, which insulated it relatively from the other programmes going on in the village. Logistical problems were what dictated the restructuring of the programmes under geographical clusters. Three to four villages which were geographically contiguous were organised under one cluster with a supervisor in charge. This made monitoring relatively easier. The positive effect of this has been the closer involvement of other supervisors in the team with the balwadi programme, and its being linked much more closely to other initiatives. For instance, when the training for women who were illiterate was being organised through Mobile Creches, a literacy drive was organised to co-incide with the training programme.

It was decided to incorporate traditional teaching methods - chart reading by rote, for example, primarily as a response to the villagers, who were disapproving of 'so much singing and dancing and no teaching', but subsequently found that they can be useful too. Reading something aloud does make for familiarity and pleasure for the child.

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3 GAINING CONFIDENCE

Phase five : Oct. 1992 - Sept. 1994 - Towards self-monitoring

The major change in this period was a shift towards self-evaluation rather than being monitored by the supervisors or Anuradha. This has been accompanied by the teachers articulating their needs and demands much more. A calendar that SIDH published was in response to the problems of structuring the curriculum for the various age-groups that have emerged in the balwadi over three years. (Table 1). The first draft, written by Anuradha, along with the supervisors, was finally published after a year's experimentation and feedback from the teachers. Since the calendar was devised in October 1992, the group has come up on their own with real initiatives: for instance, the *sahayika* diary, an easy device developed to keep records, to help compile their responses and experiences. A collection of stories, poems and songs is to be brought out shortly by SIDH.

Table 1 **Balwadi curriculum**

S.No	Group	Age (in years)	Curriculum
1	0	1-2 1/2	The younger siblings of balwadi children. They still play with toys. Need to be toilet-trained and looked after by the Assistant (*sahayika*)
2	1	2 1/2 - 3 1/2	Learn through songs, dances and exercises in practical life.
3	2	3 1/2 - 4 1/2	Learn through sensorial material and play-way methods, number from 1-10, and language through sounds and some alphabets.
4	3	4 1/2 - 5 1/2	Reading and writing with board work. Preparing for Class 1. All alphabets and numbers from 1-100
5	NFE	6 and above	Extending to Class I & II. Use of workbooks I & II.

NFE - Non Formal Education

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Perceptible change

Now, SIDH's in-house sessions deal with issues of freedom vs discipline in the classroom, refining the idea of *swatantra khel* (independent play) or developing new counting games. The team has come up with other ideas: every Saturday is spent on four different projects where the children help them with:

- Cleaning
- Repairing Play Materials
- Making New Play Materials
- Mending Clothes

Open school ?

The process of change in the report card formats indicates the distance they have come. Initially, they only had to tick boxes with the progress indicators. Now the teachers have graduated to writing out evaluations of cleanliness, curiosity, creativity and orderliness of the child.

Balwadi – school interaction

Shortly after the structural reorganisation within SIDH, the other supervisors who were involved in primary school activities and quite distant and patronising towards the balwadis were exposed to the balwadi programme through in-house workshops. As Pawan Gupta says :

> *The real breakthrough though, which was completely accidental, came in June '93 when the school teachers and supervisors were working on an alternative school curriculum. They had come up with four broad topics: Nature, Self, Awareness and Life Science. When they were attempting to break these up for the different classes, they came up with categories that were identical to those used in balwadis. For example, Nature was broken up into Air, Water, Earth, Flora, Fauna and Time, which were the same as those formulated in the balwadi curriculum. When they were struggling with how to teach these for Classes 1 and 2, it was the balwadi supervisors who came up with the most positive and creative suggestions.*

As a result of this workshop, several of them wanted to undergo balwadi training as they felt they had a lot to learn from play-way methods. Since it was the schoolteachers who spontaneously came up with this as their need, it did lead to a much closer integration of the school and balwadi programmes and a lot of interest and creative inputs from other members of the team.

Hukum, one of the supervisors, organised a workshop in Dec '93, to break up the balwadi curriculum into daily lesson plans, as a further development from the balwadi curriculum as set out in the calendar. Environment-related theme words such as 'water' were chosen. Water was broken down into why, what, how, when and where. The answers formed the content from which those relevant to under 5-year-olds were prioritised, and ways of teaching these were discussed. Then the daily lesson plan was finalised.

Similarly, Shobhan, another superviser, on his own initiative, organised a workshop in early '94 for the balwadi teachers, on interactions with the village. This was conducted by Pavitra, one of the balwadi teachers and was held in a village with the active participation of the villagers. The positive effect of Pavitra holding the training, as opposed to a supervisor, were many. With her holding the training, the social distance between the trainer and trainee was non-existent, and she was therefore much more effective. The villagers decided to contribute labour and a bag of cement towards building a slide for their balwadi.

A giant leap ahead

From late '93, Anuradha's role has become much more of a distant supervisory one, with the initiatives and enthusiasm coming from the team. The group has now decided to concentrate on building a model balwadi, and one of the more creative teachers from the school team has been roped in for it.

> Several of them wanted to undergo balwadi training as they felt they had a lot to learn from play-way methods.

They are also coming up with more ambitious programmes like working towards making the schools and balwadis financially self-sufficient. Following the June workshop, the schools decided to part-finance their activities through income-generation programmes, which since June '93, they have been doing successfully with a nursery and the sale of greeting cards using dry wildflowers. These are being marketed through elite local schools like Woodstock and the funds generated go to the village corpus fund. Plans are on to expand on these by taking up activities like candle and chalk-making and also by charging school fees where parents can afford to pay them.

The group is now formulating annual and 5-year plans for the programmes. In July '94, Mira led the balwadi group in formulating the annual plan by prioritising areas they felt needed to develop further. They split the year into 3-month units that would tackle the following areas: cleanliness, *swatantra khel*, village relationships and personal growth. They decided to concentrate on cleanliness, a problem difficult to tackle because of its vague generality. To see if quantifying it would help, cleanliness was broken up into 10 points (clean nose, face, hair, teeth etc). Daily marks were being given to the children, upto a maximum of 10, and the evaluation at the end of three months confirms that it is working very successfully so far.

Sessions on personal growth are held. Why do people find it difficult to articulate or communicate? Is it lack of information or feelings of inferiority? These sessions are still continuing and a similar exercise of breaking up the problems is being attempted.

> Though community development has always been linked to the balwadi teacher, her role as facilitator was handicapped by the fact that most of the teachers were very much younger than the mothers in the village they related to.

Their ambitious five-year-plan is to make balwadis totally self-sustaining financially, by making the balwadis a *mahila dal* programme. Though community development has always been linked to the balwadi teacher, her role as facilitator was handicapped by the fact that most of the teachers were very much younger than the mothers in the village they related to. Today it is different, as the balwadi teachers are older and more experienced.

Future programmes

Over the next five years, training more local village women as balwadi teachers to take over running the balwadis is being planned. A beginning has already been made in this direction successfully, since 1993, with the appointment of assistant *sahayikas* who are paid as *mahila dal* helpers. These women, whose activities would be monitored, would become literate within a year and would be paid from the *mahila dal* account.

Between the next two to five years, ideally, a step-by-step withdrawal by the teachers will take place with the responsibility of running the balwadi handed over to the village women who will manage them. Wherever income-generating programmes are not successful after the next two years, the village should be willing to support the teacher in kind, such as payment in local produce.

The group is now working towards an alternative model which could be much cheaper than a school and could be used for other educational and community activities. Combining two balwadis of adjoining villages, which extend upto Class 2 in the mornings, with a night school for older children or adults, it will be run by the same teachers. They would try and motivate older children who are able, to go to the nearby government school.

SIDH already has a pool of ex-Class 5 children from their schools who are available to volunteer and teach in these night schools, and in the long run, may be motivated to take over the running of these centres. This experiment has just begun in two adjoining villages - Jhinsi and Nautha.

The school team has also been working on workbooks which would be used in these centres. In the schools they have devised a supplementary syllabus which concentrates on linking other subjects together in a local perspective, and practical knowledge related to their lives. It also has information for reflections on social injustice: issues of gender, class, community and consumerism are raised, as are the intellectual and manual labour divide, the rural/urban, and language divide. The team is currently working on modifying this as a handbook for the night school in the education centres.

In retrospect, there is no denying the breakthrough that has been made,

Table 2 **The growth pattern of SIDH**

Year	Centres	Teachers	Children	Supervisors
1990	4	4	84	1
1991	10	12	170	1
1992	15	20	220	2
1993	12	15	225	3 Cluster-in-charges
1994	12	15	250	1 RP & CI's

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particularly since 1994, though it has always necessarily been a long and slow process.

Anuradha adds :

With the benefit of experience, we're much more confident. We've learnt a lot and if we were beginning the programme afresh, we would have this to say about curriculum.

Traditional teaching methods - like learning aloud by rote, can also be useful, when used in conjunction with other playway methods.

The balwadi is different from a school, and also very different from a home - freedom operates within the rules that are laid down.

The less the gap between the trainer and the trainee -social and intellectual - the more effective the training . Motivation also increases if the trainer is part of the same peer group.

It can help to tackle a problem by defining it - by breaking it down into components.

Playway methods are important not only to stimulate the child, but also the teacher.

The freedom versus discipline dichotomy can be handled better by shifting the focus to within the individual e.g. encouraging the teacher to monitor herself.

I would not hold such directive training sessions, with inputs in skill/knowledge as I did earlier. I would begin from personal memories/experiences of the teacher, and encourage more creative inputs, fairly early on, and concentrate on personal growth/attitude change.

Competition within the team can be a useful motivating tool.

I would be stricter with recruitment and the most important attribute would be the sensitivity of the teacher.

The group is now working towards an alternative model which could be much cheaper than a school and could be used for other educational and community activities. Combining two balwadis of adjoining villages, which extend upto Class 2 in the mornings, with a night school for older children or adults, it will be run by the same teachers.

4 THE CHILD EDUCATORS

The problems

When the balwadi programme was launched in 1989, SIDH began with a disadvantage. Young girls who may have passed Class 4 and 5, and who could be trained to work in balwadis, had to be depended upon.

Another problem was lack of training material geared to such young girls, who were barely literate. There was a high drop-out rate, because many of them left after getting married. It took a great deal of repetition and clarification of concepts before they began innovating and adapting the material.

Yet again, the expectation of villagers who had heard of ICDS and anganwadi government programmes and expected handouts, had to be confronted.

It took some time and effort to explain that, on the contrary, the villagers would be expected to contribute towards the setting up of the school/balwadi building.

There were other personal blocks:

I remember being quite revolted at the thought of wiping a child's snot, or cleaning their bottoms. We'd all say, "Yes, yes, we'll do it," but we were all quite repelled at the thought. I remember for a long time, I couldn't bring myself to wipe a child's nose - I'd take the kid to the tap and let it be washed off. Then I'd watch Anuradhadi do it when she came to visit a balwadi, and felt if she could do it, so could I. Then I gradually began.

– Mira, now Supervisor, Balwadis.

Balwadi – a career?

The reasons for the balwadi teachers joining were many and varied: for some of them it was accidental, while some others joined after watching the balwadis function, or had friends teaching and then decided to join. Pratibha, for example, says :

I liked the idea of being a madam.

For Savitri it was a calculated decision. She felt if she was involved in teaching, then it would further her own education, which for her, was the main motive.

Anita Rawat, who joined because she thought she'd see the world, felt it would act as a stepping stone. There are at least two women in the group who think like her – Rukmini and Sumitra.

For others, it was looking for a job. This is particularly, though not exclusively, true for the urban recruits from Mussoorie. Mira, who is from a village and is now a supervisor says :

I had finished my inter. and was wondering what to do. I got some forms to join nursing and was going to apply. My father heard about SIDH and I came here. I wanted a job and thought that it would be like teaching in a school. I didn't know anything about the philosophy of SIDH then.

Sumitra Rawat felt she didn't enjoy herself. She used to get impatient with children and she left to join the Home Guards. There she says she had a good time, but when she saw people being killed and when two women from her group were brutally assaulted at Tyooni, she decided to leave and come back and work in a balwadi.

Savitri Chauhan, on the other hand, says she wouldn't choose to do any other job, even if it paid much more. She gets involved and really enjoys the work:

I wouldn't be happy doing anything else. I am sure.

Savitri Tamta, Bhediyan balwadi, has this to say :

I wanted a job. For me, the Kausani training was a nice holiday. At first I found it very difficult to manage children. They would keep running away. It was a nightmare. I used to think – what am I doing in this godforsaken village? Being from Mussoorie, I had problems with the Jaunpuri language. After six months I liked it. I still lose my temper sometimes. But especially in this last year I've got more interested. I'd like to make a model balwadi.

The teachers blossom

One significant impact that the balwadi programme has had on the teachers is that they are all studying further. The combination of institutional encouragement and peer pressure has had a positive effect. They are also in a position now to pay for their forms or exam. fees, or borrow books from the SIDH library or from each other. They range from Naro Devi and Kasturi, a 15-year-old assistant *sahayika*, studying for the Class 2 and 3 examinations, to Mira, studying for her B.A. exams.

I was in Class 8 when I joined. Now, I have passed school and am going to take the inter. exam. this year. I'm planning to carry on studying for as long as I can. If I had stayed on in the village, I would have dropped out after Class 8. – Pavitra Rawat

The development in terms of human resources has been the most important achievement of SIDH in the balwadi programme. Not only are all of them studying further on their own, but they say they have gained a great deal in terms of confidence. This is confirmed by Shoban, a supervisor.

I was very shy when I joined. I wouldn't lift my head up. I was very uncomfortable about meeting people... you can see for yourself how much I talk now. We've also learnt a lot about other useful things: health and how to manage first aid in an emergency.

– Pavitra Rawat, Riyat Balwadi.

I was scared of taking responsibility earlier, since then I've got used to it. I also enjoy the work and the children.

– Savitri Chauhan, Talogi Balwadi.

However, not all of them are as outgoing as Pavitra and Savitri. Surmila Rani adds :

I'm not so shy in my own village but outside it is more difficult. I thought a job would help me. Besides preparing for the high school exam, I'm also reading stories in Champak and other magazines.

Similarly, Naro Devi, who trained when they were having a drive to bring in illiterate women into the programme, feels she has gained a great deal from the exposure and training:

I assist the teacher and if she's not there for any reason then I run the balwadi myself... I learnt about colours. I didn't know about dates before, now I know...Personally, I think I learnt a lot by just going to Delhi. Paharis are so scared, women won't even go to Kempty...you learn about the world if you go out...I've now got myself a gobar gas plant and now my husband will make the tea for me sometimes because its so easy to run. It also saves me a lot of time collecting firewood and you know how long a fire can take to light in the monsoons...

Family pressures

Some of them have decided to resist pressure from home to get married. Two of the women, Mira and Savitri got married after the programme began. Mira had an unorthodox wedding - she married a co-worker in SIDH, and retains her unmarried name. He is supportive and positively encourages her to work.

Savitri's has been a very different story. She joined the programme just as it was starting off, and was very enthusiastic. She was slated to take over as the supervisor, as hers was the best balwadi in all of Garhwal. Her parents put a lot of pressure on her to get married. She agreed, but only to someone who would allow her to continue working and studying. They found someone who agreed. Three months after she got married, she got pregnant and he wouldn't allow her to go out of town for training or spend a night away. This made it impossible for her to get involved in training workshops. She now has two children, is desperately overworked, and just cannot make the kind of contributions she is capable of, to the programme. She says it is difficult with two children.

The events in Savitri's life have had a big impact on some of the others. They have been resisting fierce pressure from home to have arranged marriages.

To school with big sister

Pavitra feels that her family has stopped pressurising her to get married after she started working. Rama's family has accepted her decision not to marry. In fact, she recently helped with financial arrangements when her younger sister got married and since she started working has acquired more 'weight' in the family: She is consulted on all important decisions, which was not the case earlier.

Personal growth

There has been considerable progress within the group. Absenteeism has improved considerably, and they are much more self-motivated than was the case earlier. These shifts are apparent in the changes that have taken place in monitoring procedures. In 1991-92 it was the supervisor who did the monitoring with the help of a close-ended checklist. In 1992-93 a new open-ended checklist with more space for descriptive processes was introduced. Since 1994 it is the teachers who monitor themselves. They give reports on their work, on reasons for poor attendance of children if applicable, on maintenance of play materials, on how they handle children aged 6+ or under two, how they approach children who don't attend the balwadi, what they are doing about the women's group, the night school and education centres.

They have improved their interpersonal skills and now handle their problems and seek solutions amongst themselves wherever they can. Some of them related how they had attempted to solve the problem of children consistently coming dirty to the balwadi. For three consecutive days, the teacher had left early and gone to their homes to clean the children. From the fourth day, the situation improved considerably. Prabha was having a problem coping by herself with the three groups in her balwadi. Rukmini volunteered to show her how she managed. Similarly, they exchange notes on how they can sort out the problem of 3-year-olds coming with their younger siblings. Two suggestions were mooted in the group: one, to get a helper to take care of them; where there was a single teacher running the balwadi, maybe she could get the older children to help?

The development since the beginning of the programme has been substantial. The teachers display a great deal more initiative, and are more enthusiastic.

After the first training in Kausani, which was about how to teach children through songs and stories, the next two to three training sessions were repeating the same things. I found myself getting very bored. It was only the trainer who would talk and explain how to do something. Now its different - we discuss our own problems and the suggestions also come from the group.

– Savitri Tamta, Mussoorie town.

After I saw Pavitra holding the training workshop, I felt I could do it too. Now things are more structured, especially after we devised the curriculum... We have monthly meetings to exchange experiences. Earlier the girls were much more hesitant, they wouldn't speak. There is also an element of competition which helps. They have contributed to the diary, they suggested adding more pages and having a daily instead of a weekly page. They have a lot of enthusiasm, maybe because the only other option is to get married. But they've moved ahead a lot inspite of most of them having to do a lot of housework (fetching grass, cooking, working in the fields etc). I think the main personal impact has been education.

– Mira, Supervisor, Balwadis.

A great deal of time and effort has gone into, and continues to be expended on, tackling problems of self-confidence. It is a nebulous area which is difficult to quantify. They had two in-house meetings to discuss personal growth. Here they evaluated themselves and each other, and discussed parent-adult-child interactions. In the annual plan, they had also decided to spend three months in the year looking more closely at some questions raised during the meeting.

Despite the obvious progress, and that is apparent also in the increased respect the balwadi teachers get from the villagers now, Anuradha and some supervisers feel that the balwadi group is still way behind the school group which has shown leadership, and a vision for the future. The school group will not accept anything she says till they are convinced about it. She finds them more challenging to work with as a result and says she has learnt a great deal from them in the last year. It is not possible for her to say the same for the balwadi group. This definitely frustrates her.

Remuneration

When queried about wages, the teachers were quite reticent. (Table 3) There is a consensus that the wages are not enough for those who have to buy food, while for others who get food from their village it is adequate. They are also aware of the fact that they do get paid more than the government anganwadi worker, and other balwadi teachers working through other NGOs in the hills. The government pays a flat Rs.250 to anganwadi workers and Uttarkhand Sewa Nidhi, which financially supports balwadis in the hill areas through disbursing government funds, has reservations in financing SIDH's balwadis.

They have few complaints about working conditions, as they are able to solve them on their own. The wages of the senior balwadi teacher and the junior school teacher are the same, as the balwadi teacher works for 3-4 hours compared to the school teacher who works for 5-6 hours on a teaching day. Both are expected to work on other initiatives in the village beyond their teaching responsibilities. The senior school teacher is also a facilitator and is responsible for initiating community development programmes in the village.

Educational qualification is one factor in the different wage scales in SIDH, but mobility within the categories is not dependent on educational qualification. A junior balwadi teacher who has passed Class 5 would move up the scale depending on her performance, and several teachers have switched from school to balwadi and vice versa, mainly in the senior balwadi teacher/junior

Table 3 **The wage structure in SIDH**

Category		Pay Scale, Rs./month
Balwadi Teacher	- Junior	300-20-600
	- Senior	425-25-900
Balwadi Helper		150
School Teacher	- Junior	425-25-900
	- Senior	600-30-1800
Office Staff	- Clerical	600-30-1800
	- Supervisory	700-35-2450
	- Senior Supervisory	1200-50-4500

school teacher category, with no difference in their pay scales.

In addition, they get an ex-gratia amount depending on performance, which varies from 1 week to 1 month's salary, paid holiday for a month, which is encashable if they desire, and the option of joining the LIC's' 'money back' scheme. This covers them for accident and life insurance, and would pay them Rs 5000 every 5 years and Rs 45,000 in the 20th year. If they choose to join the scheme, then SIDH pays one-third of the contributions.

Strategies for motivation

Besides, delinking the wage structure, SIDH has tried several ways to get around the balwadi/school divide. The strategy of encouraging individuals has been successful in motivating some teachers, but has also caused heartburn among others. At a discussion, Shanti, one of the teachers said:

There is a tendency to elevate one person and dismiss the others. Someone may talk less and do more. We're not appreciated enough for the work we do.

This provoked protests from most of the supervisors:

Encouragement needs positive performance. Otherwise for how long can the supervisor just carry on encouraging people? He will criticise and scold after that. – Hukum.

I feel that the drive has to come from the person in the end. The training is the same for everyone. After that its up to the person. – Shobhan.

Shanti is perceived as lazy by the supervisors, and the 'competition' is working to motivate her. Subsequent to this conversation, Shanthi is coming up with new innovations.

But Mira would prefer to be more cautious about using competition as a tool. It is a double-edged weapon and she feels it may lead to individuals offering less support to each other within the group, with each person wanting to be a star.

Overall, Anuradha feels that with whatever different motives they joined, some of them do enjoy their work a great deal and the main motivating factor, she feels, is the feedback they get from the villages. But more important has been the confidence they have developed from being part of the team, and in working together as one.

Competition is a double-edged weapon. It may lead to individuals offering less support to each other.

5 IMPACT OF THE PROGRAMME

When SIDH chose Jaunpur as the base for operations, there was no other NGO working in this area except one health-based missionary organisation, which had done some work in this area. The people had little contact with 'outsiders' apart from some government schemes which had been implemented there. SIDH's activities depended on the needs of the villagers and they were clear that they would only take up projects where there was active involvement and participation by the villagers.

This was how the schools programme began - it was a demand from the villagers. However, the balwadis when they began, were a need perceived not by the villagers, but the school teachers in SIDH's primary schools. That did make for a great deal of difference in the attitude of the villagers. The first year and a half was, as a result, an uphill struggle for the balwadi programme.

Wooing the villagers

Winning the villagers over was necessarily a slow process. It was only in the second year of the programme, that they really worked at it. The balwadi teams composed Jaunpuri songs to enthuse the village.

Come to the land of balwadis
And see how much affection children can get
When you send your children there
It makes your work a little lighter
They'll find a direction, and security,
And they'll be happy
And you won't worry about them
When mothers go to the steep hillside to fetch grass
Children will get love in the balwadi
They will play and learn
Through songs and games

There were *mahila dal* meetings at which the teachers demonstrated their methods - how through a song or a game children were learning numbers and other skills. Pavitra says of this period:

> *I would often find the villagers listening in to the sessions quietly from outside the room. They would quietly check to see if I was doing what I had demonstrated.*

Regular parent-teacher meetings began to be held to discuss problems. The *mahila dal* meetings would also include discussions on health and nutrition, including discussing and exchanging nutritious recipes with local foodstuffs. They would read out *Hamaru Raibar,* SIDH's newsletter that contains a lot of useful information – details of funds allocated to villages under Jawahar Rozgar Yojna schemes, other subsidies and schemes available like solar cookers and bio-gas plants, water harvesting, accounts of agricultural experiments both positive and negative. Besides, once a year, after the winter, when the women are relatively free compared to the rest of the year, they organise a *mahila mela* on the 8th of March. Here they have an exhibition and sale of local things which the women bring for sale. They relax, share experiences and sing songs. In the last two years, they have also distributed prizes for women who have become literate.

The village women have gained directly as a result. Earlier they were growing only corn - now a number of them successfully grow potatoes, peas, new varieties of wheat and rice. Talogi last year decided to set aside some land for a nursery where they want to experiment further with other crops. In 1992, the women in Bhediyan discussed the enormous amount of time spent in threshing wheat and took a loan from SIDH to buy a threshing machine. The experiment was so successful that another village got together to buy one - without a loan. In Bhatoli, the women decided to build a bathroom for women.

In 1993, SIDH published a guide, which covers areas such as literacy, health, income generation possibilities and agricultural inputs, animal husbandry, fuel and fodder inputs.

Gradual acceptance

These other inputs and the increasing enthusiasm of some balwadi teachers led to a change in the perception of the villagers:

It was a year before we convinced them of the value of the balwadi. Slowly, we built a rapport. Now we discuss health or individual children or cleaning the village. Once a month we bring in Mr Tripathi (the agricultural expert) to give information on seeds...Its improving our area, I'd like to extend the mahila dals to some other villages. – Pavitra.

Our kids study instead of being at home. The schools won't take such young children. – Khimdev Devi, Talogi.

I'm looking after my grandchildren and if they're around I get that much less work done. My daughter-in-law works in the fields, my son works in Kempty, so it affects me more than anyone else. It doesn't affect men that much, what affects them more is finding out about schemes and loans. – Bhagwan Devi, Talogi.

It is very difficult for children to adjust to going to school. Its easier when they've been in the balwadi. Its helping women get together to work in the fields - earlier when we got back from the field it would take us time to find them. Now we

All part of the day's work

Solving a problem

know where they are...there's no hospital close by, there's a nurse far away in Kempty, so the balwadis help. We've sorted out our water problem with the help of the mahila dals.

– Tara Devi, Talogi.

Earlier, the balwadi used to be erratic. Not any more. We built the building ourselves. Eight days in a month the govt school is closed anyway. This way they can stay out of the muck and learn something.

– Surjan Devi, Riyat.

Initially, it was just song and dance. Now we see them working on slates. We know why we should send them food to eat in the balwadi - so they learn to wash their hands before and after eating. We also know, if we don't have the time, they'll get cleaned at the balwadi. We get some rest. They also become clever in the balwadi.

– Phainto Devi, Talogi.

It was three years after the programme began that the village began to see for themselves how much better the balwadi children performed in schools compared to others.

If they go to the balwadi, they learn faster and much more. My son went to the balwadi before joining the govt school when he was four. He knows all the letters in the alphabet and tables upto 5. His friends who went to the government school don't know the first letters in the alphabet.

– Naro Devi, Riyat.

The school teachers have also perceived a visible difference among the school children - between those who join from a balwadi and those who don't. Mahipal, a supervisor, claims there is a distinct difference between the two: the balwadi children are not so shy, and are much more outspoken and articulate. This is confirmed by others, including government school teachers - since a number of balwadi graduates join the government schools later -who say that when they join Class 1 they are already familiar with a lot of the curriculum, besides being used to the idea of a school.

Educational achievements

Though there are no statistics available to assess the impact of the balwadi on children who have gone on to other schools, the performance of children in the Sarabtalla government school suggests that children who have been through the balwadis perform better. In Sarabtalla all the children who have stood first in class are from SIDH balwadis. In Class 1, the children who have stood first, second and third are from SIDH balwadis.

Sunita studied for three years in the Kandi balwadi. When she was 6, she joined the govt. school in Sarabtalla in Class 1. She was so far ahead of the others that after the half-yearly exams the school promoted her to Class 2. She is still way ahead of the others after jumping a year. Her mother says its unlikely they would

Sharing the family chores

have sent her to school at all if it hadn't been for the balwadi opening in Kandi. Now she is doing so well, they intend sending her to school at least till Class 8.

It is this more than anything else that has led to a reevaluation of the balwadis in the eyes of the villagers. The brilliant performance of the SIDH primary school students last year in the board exams - with one student topping the list, all students getting a first division, and 23 distinctions - has also helped to raise the credibility of SIDH, and by extension, the balwadis as well.

Pavitra says of Talogi:

If I fall ill and don't open the balwadi, the villagers immediately come home to find out what the matter - is. They offer to take me to the doctor in Mussoorie. They care.

Its a mutual process, since she often does the same for several villagers, bringing them to a hospital in Mussoorie and following up their medical complaints.

Since the balwadis opened, the girls who are expected to take care of them, can take their younger wards to the balwadi and continue their education. While the enrolment of girls in SIDH schools has increased from 15% to 80%, balwadis provide the only access to education in villages where there are no govt. or SIDH schools for even 10-12 year old girls. Overall it is clear that girls predominate in the balwadis and non-formal school, and boys in the govt/SIDH schools (male-to-female ratio in balwadis is 1:1.3, night schools 1:2, and in SIDH schools it is 1.81:1). Once they are 10 years old, many girls are pulled out of school to share greater responsibilities at home. In Bhatoli village, as many as 15 girls do not go to school and have continued their studies only through the non-formal classes run by SIDH in the evening.

Wider issues

The balwadis and schools run by SIDH are also part of a health awareness programme run by SHARE, a voluntary organisation providing health inputs for Jaunpur block. As a result, 10-15 children on average in each village get immunised, and have participated in health campaigns like iodine deficiency awareness.

Cleanliness is clearly Anuradha's priority. It is a debatable issue to what extent the emphasis placed on cleanliness and hygiene is an urban middle-class imposition. Certainly, it has been an intergral part of their programme. Anuradha says :

Schools was the demand of the villagers, clean villages was our demand in return.

Preventive health measures - clean water, sanitation, toilet construction (or covering excreta with mud so that it replenishes the soil) are central to SIDH's community development agenda and the balwadi programme. Anuradha estimates that 8 out of the 15 balwadi teachers, who have been with the programme for more than 3 years have internalised these values.

Other initiatives are continuing with the women's groups: Bhatoli is currently engaged in planting fodder species, the Kandi women have collected money in a fixed deposit. They are beginning a new experiment in poultry farming. Customary law in Jaunpur ensures that any money generated through poultry farming belongs exclusively to women.

There are problems too. Bhediyan village is very upset because SIDH decided to close the balwadi there. The tussle is over the venue. Anuradha says:

They are a rich village comparatively. If they want the balwadi, they should be willing to put in more. Its just not practical to function from a veranda.

Some hindsights

Anuradha, looking back, says about village interaction:

In a village, the balwadi programme should be integrated firmly with other work in the village, right from the beginning.

Women sould be actively involved in running the balwadi right from its inception.

Enforce rules right from the beginning to increase accountability, including taking hard decisions if necessary to close down the balwadi.

Do a more systematic survey to determine the distance of the village from the government school.

Demand fees wherever people can afford to pay.

Demand a greater commitment from the community including voluntary labour in the balwadi - at least 15 minutes to half an hour each day.

Towards making the programme financially self-sustaining, encourage the villagers to get involved in other income generation programmes so that a percentage contribution could be made towards the balwadis.

Avoid the 'balwadi' nomenclature. Call them 'hamari bal pathshala' *(little schools), so there is less resistance to the idea. All villagers prefer the term "Schools".*

We were hesitant - and squeamish - about making demands from the village earlier. Today we're not - it makes for more mutual respect that way.

Schools was the demand of the villagers, clean villages was our demand in return, that is, preventive health measures - clean water, sanitation and toilet construction.

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6 ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURE

Towards formal structure

For the first year and a half, SIDH had no formal structure. In this period there were 7-8 people working in the organisation, but there were informal allocations of work between them.

In early 1991, with the expansion of the organisation to 20-25 people, they divided the work areas into three: the school group, the balwadi/ *mahila dal* and sanitation, and people divided their responsibilities accordingly, with Pawan and Anuradha overseeing their work. This was the first time that two supervisors were appointed to oversee the schools and the balwadi/*mahila dal* programme.

In mid 1992, with the growth of the organisation to a strength of 40 people, they devised a more formal organisational structure, which they hoped would increase the motivation of the team as it delegated a considerable amount of responsibility. It also reduced the time being spent by the supervisors, walking from one village to another, thereby giving them scope for contributions they were capable of making.

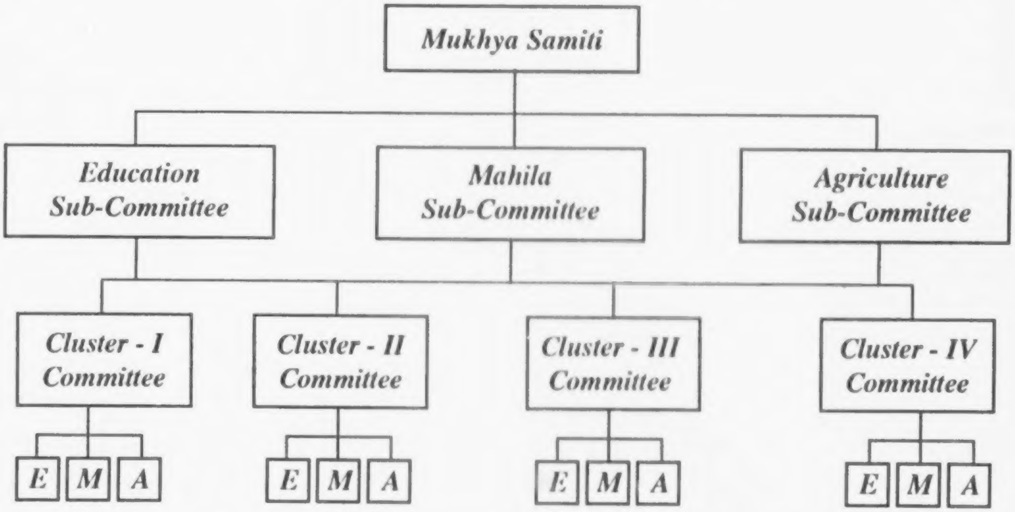
This structure was devised after a workshop on supervision, held in March 1992 attended by Save the Children Fund (SCF), the funding agency, and consultants from Indian Institute of Management (IIM), which clarified several things for SIDH. An in-house workshop which followed this, to discuss job responsibilities and delegation of authority came up with the recommendation that contiguous villages be grouped together for supervision.

Resource groups were formed, comprising two or three individuals who were available to support and advise the supervisors in the areas of school education, balwadis and *mahila dals*, and the sanitation and agricultural programmes. Anuradha was a part of the balwadi resource group in this period and was also sharing the responsibility with Pawan of overseeing all the programmes.

The cluster concept

In mid-'93 SIDH decided to modify the structure by grouping the entire work area into four clusters and putting one senior team member in-charge of all the activities. (Fig.1) The cluster in-charges (CI) were responsible for monitoring the activities and coordination with the field office. Further, to increase the participation of other members of the team and the community in the various programmes of

Fig.1 **ORGANOGRAM 1**


Mukhya Samiti
Education Sub-Committee
Mahila Sub-Committee
Agriculture Sub-Committee
Cluster - I Committee
Cluster - II Committee
Cluster - III Committee
Cluster - IV Committee
E
M
A

E - Education Committee; M - Mahila Committee; A - Agriculture Committee

---

SIDH, it was decided to form four separate sub-committees in each cluster:

1. Education sub-committee, comprising of cluster-in-charge, senior school and balwadi teachers from each of the schools and balwadis in the cluster, and one member from the community from each of the villages where an education programme was being run.

2. *Mahila dal* sub-committee, again comprising the CI, senior balwadi/school teacher in charge of the various *mahila dals* within the cluster, and one woman from each of the *dals* within the cluster.

3. Agriculture sub-committee, comprising of the CI, senior team member looking after the agriculture/horticulture/forestry programme in the various villages and one member from the community from each village.

4. Cluster sub-committee, where the representatives from each of the above three sub-committees were present.

Thus SIDH had four committees in each cluster, i.e., sixteen committees in the four clusters. There was a similar structure at the top, eg, education committee, which consisted of the 4 CIs, Pawan and

Anuradha and representatives from each of the four education sub-committees; *Mahila Dal* and the Agriculture committees were similarly constituted. Finally there was the *Mukhya Samiti,* which consisted of the 4 CIs, Pawan, Anuradha and representatives from each of the three committees.

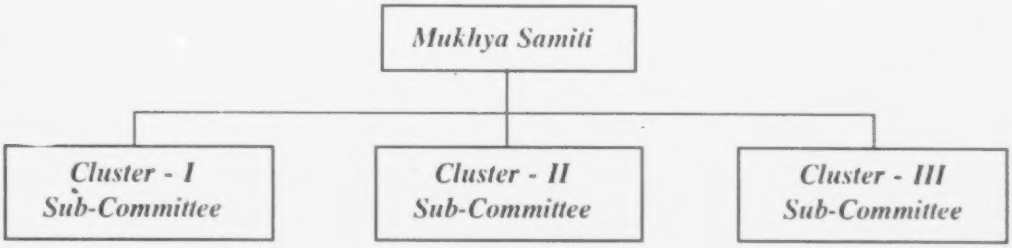
The present structure

After April '94, this complicated structure was simplified. The clusters were reduced from 4 to 3 by regrouping the villages. And only one subcommittee in each cluster was formed, doing away with the sector-wise committees. Similarly at the *Mukhya Samiti* level, sectional committees were done away with. In this committee, efforts are made to involve all the active team members from each village and active members of the community. (Fig.2)

Part of the structural reorganisation has also involved merging the two emerging categories of school teachers and balwadi teachers, by encouraging cross-overs between the two. This, along with other trainings that members undergo, is to encourage them, not so much to specialise in one particular technical field, but to learn a variety of skills, so they can develop as community facilitators. All these changes have been preceded by workshops discussing the problems that were being faced, and possible solutions by team members, whose recommendations have resulted in the structural changes adopted and refined over the years.

In addition, a number of areas were decentralised in 1993. To encourage the team to take decisions on their own, and familiarise themselves with accounting and budgeting procedures, the teams have been allotted a sum of Rs 25,000 per cluster, and a sum of Rs 20 per child per year, which is to be to spent on what is considered most appropriate, subject to final approval. Quarterly and Annual reports on their work are also submitted and the team formulates annual and five-year targets for SIDH.

Fig.2 **ORGANOGRAM 2**


Mukhya Samiti
Cluster - I Sub-Committee
Cluster - II Sub-Committee
Cluster - III Sub-Committee

Worried about the consequences of too rapid an expansion in terms of reduced manoeuvrability for the organisation, SIDH made a policy decision not to expand further in 1993. Having grown rapidly in the previous two years, the fears were that further expansion might result in bureaucratisation and inertia, as has been observed in large organisations. They have also been gradually reducing budgets and cutting down the student-teacher ratio in their schools towards creating an educational model of two-teacher schools. This, along with their plans for community development and income generation, is what defines the contours of their dream: an alternative educational model which could be financially self-sustaining.

Hidden divide

When SIDH began their school programme, they recruited Class 10 graduates who could be trained to teach in the primary school. These were invariably young boys since no girls in the village had passed class 10 and the older women were not suitable. They also recruited four young girls from Mussoorie to teach in the schools and balwadis. Initially, the girls from Mussoorie thought of themselves as superior and/or were certainly perceived as being superior by the village girls.

When I first joined SIDH, I was intimidated by the Mussoorie girls because I was from the village and they were from the town. I felt my Hindi wasn't good enough and they were more sophisticated. It took me two months before I could speak my mind Initially, I was scared of outsiders.

– Mira Kainthura, Supervisor, Balwadis.

This social divide overlapped with the hierarchy that still continues between the school and the balwadi group, despite several attempts to counter it. Mira adds:

We used to think schools are superior to balwadis. There were more Mussoorie girls teaching in the school. We used to feel envious and neglected. But not any more, especially after Rukmini joined the balwadi group. After that we felt it was OK, there was no discrimination and there was no reason for us to feel inferior.

There is a significant gender divide between the two groups with the men dominating the school group and women almost exclusively working in the balwadis.

It is interesting to explore this hierarchy within the SIDH group, since it is a real one and continues to dog the organisation, even if it is not a source of tension anymore. Apart from the urban vs rural element, there is a significant gender divide between the two groups with the men dominating the school group and women almost exclusively working in the balwadis. All the boys in the group are either supervisors or in the school group, which is, according to Anuradha and Pawan, miles ahead of the balwadi group, not just in terms of contributing to the curriculum and the school programme, but also in envisaging a direction for the future development of the organisation.

The only man who joined as a balwadi teacher in the first year, left after a year and a half. He was very good with the children and facilitating the women's groups, but left because he couldn't take the peer pressure from the men in the group, who ridiculed him for being the only boy in the group doing a girl's job!

What the teachers say

Most teachers in the balwadi group feel that schools are one rung up the ladder.
– Mira.

I've taught in schools and balwadis. I think teaching in the balwadi is much more difficult, but schools make a more visible impact and are valued more by the villagers. – Prabha.

I think the exposure is more in schools: when I joined, I was poor in arithmetic, geography and science. I also learnt while I was teaching in school. When I was asked to join the balwadis I was scared my development would stop. I don't see it as a demotion though. I was pleased that I had been chosen to run a model balwadi.
– Rukmini.

From balwadi to school

We don't get enough affirmation. We're not appreciated enough for the work we do. – Shanti.

Earlier the supervisors were dismissive. They would treat it as 'just singing and dancing.' Now they take it more seriously. – Pavitra.

Monitoring has become more precise... it was loose earlier. If something was supposed to be done and it wasn't, then the attitude was 'Oh, it'll be done next month.'

– Shobhan, a cluster supervisor.

I did think it was mostly song and dance. Villagers didn't think too much of them either, at least initially. Then we worked on our (school) syllabus, and it was after that we all got clearer on what the aims and the objectives of the balwadi were. Now the villagers are much more positive about the balwadis as well. They think it's necessary.

– Hukum, another supervisor.

I did think it was mostly song and dance. Villagers didn't think too much of them either. Now the villagers are much more positive.

In retrospect

Pawan and Anuradha between them had divided up responsibilities within the organisation. Anuradha was responsible for the balwadi programme, they both worked together on the schools programme and Pawan was largely responsible for organisational and financial management.

Pawan says :

For the first two years I felt the balwadi programme wasn't working. There was a lot of theory and playway and sensorial methods, but I wasn't convinced it was being translated into practice. There was a lot of absenteeism. I felt the balwadi programme was working out too expensive in terms of the cost-benefit ratio. In 1992, I was in favour of either disbanding it or strengthening it visibly. Anuradha disagreed. I felt she was too indulgent and protective with them and they were neither committed nor enjoying themselves. It was in 1992, after they came back from the Mobile Creches' training in Delhi, that I first noted a visible difference in terms of their self-confidence. Since then... Nayarghati made a difference and when they trained the women's group from Delhi, that helped them a lot. The single most important factor has been exposure to a different environment.

We've come a long way. Now there is much more accountability... but I feel that the girls aren't as motivated, especially compared to the school team. The other supervisors were neglecting *balwadis. They now recognise, or have been forced to recognise, their importance. There has been an attempt at conscious sensitisation, and balwadis which were low-priority earlier - have been given the necessary importance.*

The new development of two-teacher balwadis extended upto Class 2 along with night schools is a really viable educational model for the hills - it is cheap and can be replicated easily. Certainly, in the next twenty years, I can't see the govt. opening a school in every village. Then this becomes a practical and sustainable alternative.

Anuradha feels Pawan's attitude to the balwadis was dismissive in the early years, and that the supervisors and school team took their cue from him. When he shifted his stance, so did they, and their increasing enthusiasm reflects the change in his attitude to the balwadi. Another gender divide here? Pawan laughs off the accusation:

Its not just my saying so. So many things were happening at the same time. The training workshops, the reorganisation, and the school meeting when they came up with a curriculum identical to the balwadi, that had an enormous impact on the others.

The distinction narrows

The distinctions between the two groups have also blurred considerably, since now there is a greater overlap between the two. Some balwadi teachers are also teaching in the schools, and Rukmini, one of the best schoolteachers, has been put in charge of developing the model balwadi and strengthening the women's programme. Anuradha says :

However enthusiastic the men in the group are, and whatever initiatives they take at the village level, there will always be a barrier with the village women. Ultimately, it is the women in the group who have to take on community development.

Why is it that despite all their attempts to bridge the divide between the schools and the balwadis, the school group still retains a perceptible edge and is 'more motivated'?

Ultimately, it is the
women in the group
who have to take on
community development.

Apart from the educational attainments - and here some of the women are catching up fast - there appears to be one major factor which works against women: the very heavy burden of housework that they carry. 90% of the balwadi teachers live at home, where they have to share the unusually heavy workload of hill women. 90% of the schoolteachers live away from home - and even if they did, men have a much lighter workload on the home front. The only concession made to a woman teacher is that she doesn't have to work in the fields. The man can, however, devote more time and energy.

Anuradha feels the other factor is that the men tend to perceive their work much more in terms of long-term career development, which the women largely do not. This is certainly true if the women's answers are compared to that given by Shobhan, a cluster supervisor. He is enthusiastic, comes up with very good suggestions and demonstrates a lot of initiative. He says he enjoys the work. He dropped out of his B.A. course, and he had given up on ever getting a job. Being a Tehri dam oustee, he was hoping he'd be able to get a job reserved for local people there, but the anti-dam agitation altered his plans...then he joined SIDH and he liked the idea of working in a village... He says :

> *Money's necessary, but I don't worry too much about it. What I'm getting is enough, but I want to prepare myself for a few years later when I'll need more. I want to improve my market value.*

It remains a matter of speculation whether there is an inadvertent affirmation of masculine values regarding achievement and leadership, which are perceived with a bias most remain unaware of. Similarly, women are seen as more nurturing creatures...and appropriate for early child care. Anuradha feels she is still grappling with these questions. It remains a grey area.

One major factor which works against women: the very heavy burden of housework that they carry. The only concession made to a woman teacher is that she doesn't have to work in the fields.

7 COSTS AND BENEFITS

SIDH has been trying to integrate the education programme with experiments to combine schools with balwadis. Some schools have started including very young children by adding on pre-primary classes; while some balwadis have been upgraded, where there is no school, and the teacher trained to cope upto Class 2. Hence it is difficult to segregate expenses between the various components (schools, balwadis, Non Formal Education (NFEs) and even adult education classes). There is another important factor to be considered while doing the costing – school and balwadi teachers are not just restricted to mere teaching in the centres but act as facilitators in other programmes e.g., *mahila dals*, sanitation, credit schemes, IGPs etc. The figures below give an indication of costs of the various activities of SIDH. (Table 4)

Table 4 **Cost data on balwadi/NFEs**

	Balwadis	Schools/NFEs
No. of centres	12	12
No. of children	210	307
a. Stipend to teachers	1,16,000	1,55,000
b. Teaching materials & extra-curricular activities – 35% to balwadis; 65% to schools/NFEs	32,000	60,500
c. Stipend to supervisors – 25% to balwadis; 35% to schools/NFEs	21,675	30,345
d. Stipend to support staff – 25% to balwadis; 25% to NFEs	20,350	20,350
e. Training expenditure – 25% to balwadis; 25% to schools/NFEs	56,550	75,400
Total recurring expenses	2,71,575	3,66,565
Cost per centre	22631	30597
Cost per child	1293	1194

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Fixed costs relate to the costs of construction of buildings and huts. The decision to construct, the size of the structure, the type of materials, etc., is left to the community. On an average, the cost including labour is as follows:

Total cost for a 2 room construction	:	Rs. 40,000
Contribution by SIDH	:	Rs: 15,000
Initial expenses by SIDH on desk, durries, clock	:	Rs. 6,000

SIDH has been charging a small fee of Rs.1 to 2 per child per month in some of the balwadis and between Rs.5 to 10 in the schools. This collection is not taken by the society, but is kept in separate bank accounts in the name of the particular school and is managed by a committee of villagers. Any income from income-generation programmes also goes into this account.

A comparison

To compare with the costs of education in the State system of education, some figures on numbers and expenditures on primary education in U.P and India are given in Table 5.

These figures suggest that the cost of elementary education per child in UP (1991-92) is Rs.581, far lower than SIDH's figures (1993-94) of Rs.1,293 for the balwadi and Rs.1,105 for the school. However, the validity of the official estimate cannot be assumed as it does not appear to include Central assistance, and besides, refers to an earlier period.

Though the SIDH figures for schools are considerably higher, the schools also do perform very well. That may be because the student-teacher ratio in SIDH schools is much lower, 15:1 compared to 63:1 in govt schools. These figures in any case might be misleading since there is no available break-up of figures relating to the hill schools. There is likely to be a higher student-teacher ratio in any case in all schools in the hills, because of the demographic contours of the region and the different arithmetic.

The muddiness of the figures available makes it difficult to work out a cost-benefit analysis. Going by the reaction of the villagers, they do appreciate and prefer SIDH to govt. schools, in some cases walking longer to reach them. (This is not encouraged by SIDH though, as they see their role as a supplementary) The main problem people have with the government schools is the regular absenteeism of the teachers, particularly in hill areas, where monitoring is almost non-existent, because of the physically difficult terrain. The exceptional results of the SIDH schools in the Class 5 Board examinations is another major factor which has affected the villagers, in their favour.

Where SIDH would appear to score significantly over govt. schools is in the perception of the villagers as being more efficient, with low drop-out rate,

Table 5 **Comparative statistics on elementary education in U.P and India**

	Uttar Pradesh			**India**		
	Primary	Upper Primary	Total Elementary	Primary	Upper Primary	Total Elementary
Enrolment (in millions)						
1988-89	12.04	2.87	14.91	68.09	37.64	105.73
1989-90	12.79	3.05	15.84	69.30	38.85	108.15
1990-91	13.51	3.10	16.61	70.37	39.81	110.18
1991-92	14.82	3.50	18.32	73.47	40.78	114.25
No. of schools						
1988-89	74705	16652	91357	548059	144145	692204
1989-90	74275	14549	88824	550700	143747	694447
1990-91	76545	14582	91127	560935	151456	712391
1991-92	78085	15328	93413	565786	152077	717863
Expenditure (Plan + non-Plan in crores)						
1988-89			655.5			5539.8
1989-90			1010.8			6888.3
1990-91			1210.1			8047.2
1991-92			1065.1			8047.2

Source : National Institute of Educational Planning and Administration

no absenteeism, community participation by the teacher in other development projects and development of local human resources.

The benefits are difficult to evaluate beyond what the villages feel about the programme. Looking at their responses, they are all very positive and feel

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if the balwadi closed down, they would be worse off in several ways. Other villages are also keen to extend the programme in their own areas, but SIDH is moving slowly and opening new ones only where they feel the teachers are trained to the required level. They feel that though it is an expensive programme, it is mainly the intangible benefits - which are difficult to calculate - that outweigh other considerations.

Sustainability

At the moment, all costs are borne by one source, the Save the Children Fund. It is the development of local human resources that has been the most important achievement, with long-term implications for the development of the area.

> Though it is an expensive programme, it is mainly the intangible benefits - which are difficult to calculate - that outweigh other considerations.

The organisation is working entirely with local people - 95% of them from local villages and the others from Mussoorie. They are constantly upgrading their skills, and their plan is that in five years time it should be possible for most team members to run their own school, while the balwadis, they hope can be entirely handed over to be run by the *mahila dals*. It is towards this process that SIDH has gradually been decreasing their budgets (the budget for the education programme in 1993-94 and 1994-95 remains the same, even though salaries have increased. In real terms, that is a decrease, which they have effected by bringing down other costs) and reducing the student-teacher ratio in the schools, to work towards a two-teacher education and community centre that can effectively function as an alternative model for educational and community needs in the hill areas.

It is because of these long-term plans that team members are also being encouraged to increase their budgeting and accounting skills and submit quarterly reports on their work. In June '93 when the schools team had their annual workshop, they looked at the budgets and took a decision that they would attempt to cut down on expenses and the student-teacher ratio wherever possible, without affecting the quality of the teaching.

As a result of these attempts, the number of balwadis in '94 went up to 12 from 8 in the previous year, despite 4 balwadi teachers having left in '93 and no new recruitments being made. In 1993, 3 balwadis were closed down because they were found not to be functioning satisfactorily. The increase in the number of balwadis was only possible because of inducting the schoolteachers into the balwadi programme as soon as it became feasible to do so.

Towards self-reliance

It is also the greater awareness in the team about financial accountability and sustainability, that has led to the formulation of their ambitious five-year-plans to make the programme self-sustaining. They are also attempting to work out local arrangements to pay the *mahila dal* helper in kind, if their income-generation plans do not succeed in generating the income that has been projected.

Whether these plans work out remains to be seen. SIDH is helping them with institutional support - a local Rotary Club may also be donating a room in the future - but they are attempting to raise resources locally as much as possible. Villages are being encouraged to contribute towards books and materials.

It will be a difficult project; the small size of the villages - the average village size is 20 families - with about 20 children to a village, make the economics of running a balwadi in every village an expensive proposition. But that has not yet contained the enthusiasm of the team.

It is the development of local human resources that has been the most important achievement. The organisation is working entirely with local people - 95% of them from local villages and the others from Mussoorie.

8 FUTURE PERSPECTIVES

Replicability

Having spent five years developing the balwadis, SIDH feels that a programme that can be replicated easily has been evolved. There is a training manual which provides a basic outline for beginners, by clarifying the concept, content and management of a balwadi. A calendar provides the outline for a monthly lesson plan for language, environment, numbers and general knowledge; and a diary provides a self-monitoring and management tool for the balwadi teacher. A book on environmental songs and stories is also available.

A 10-day training session has been devised for a minimally literate group. If this session is followed up by an additional 2-3 days a month of training, in a year's time the participant would reach an acceptable level of competence. The area-specific elements that have been used in the training programmes and which would need local modifications to suit a different situation, are the local songs and dances.

The unique features of the training programme would appear to be the special emphasis given to the personal growth and creativity of the trainee. Meditation sessions are encouraged. Anuradha now says :

> *75% of the battle is won when you succeed in shifting attitudes towards self-evaluation.*

The model being evolved - a two-teacher educational centre that will combine a night school and other community development initiatives should work out at a cost of Rs. 1,200 per child per year.

Alternative school model

The alternative school model emerged after five years of SIDH's experience with the particular problems faced by hill villages. In the hills, there is a government school in each *gram sabha*, but because the villages are small and scattered, the *gram sabha* is usually a cluster of 5-6 villages. The nearest village school is often a two hour climb for a five-year-old. By the time the children are old enough to walk back and forth, it is late for them to begin studying and drop-outs increase. This is particularly the case for the girl child, who has to look after her younger brothers and sisters and cope with housework.

Many girls are pulled out of school after Class 2 in order to help at home,

Alternative schooling

sometimes even when a primary school exists in the village. Sometimes boys too, have to help at home and drop out. The only solution in such a case is to have evening classes in the village. There is also a bias against education - villagers say schooling creates and reinforces the gap between mental and manual labour. It has, in the hills led to large scale migration, alienating the young from their land, and from farming as an occupation.

Our girls who go to school do not want to dirty their hands in the field or milking the cow.

It was with these factors in mind that SIDH evolved the alternate school model, called a *bal-patshala.* It is:

1. A balwadi that extends upto Class 2 in the mornings
2. A non-formal education centre in the evenings - with special classes for Class 5 - for those children who work during the day. Ultimately it would be run by volunteers and school children from the village.

The *bal-patshala* will be managed by the *mahila dals,* who will monitor its functioning. A village woman recruit will be trained for five years to run the *patshala.* After Class 2, children will be encouraged to join the nearest govt. school.

A village corpus fund will be set up and the *patshala* teacher will collect fees or payment in kind from the villagers. SIDH is also exploring the possibility of setting up income-generation projects for women and if these are successful, then a percentage of the profits would be donated to the village corpus found. SIDH has recently begun *patshalas* in three villages.

Policies for change : some suggestions

The main policy changes that SIDH would recommend relate to the special needs of the hill areas.

- Make special provisions for hill areas, taking their geography and demographic features into account.
- Enhance the skills of the teacher/childcare worker to include community initiatives, to build up strong community support.
- Pay higher wages to the local child care worker. At the moment, wages for anganwadi workers are abysmally low, reflecting the low value placed on work that is crucial for long-term development. In contrast, primary school teachers are comparatively very well paid. A two-pronged policy could be adopted:

  — increase wages and involvement of anganwadi worker

  — recruit local youth - who can walk in the hills and stand the cold - and train them to run primary schools at lower wages than govt. school teachers

- Alter current recruitment policies and place more emphasis on the sensitivity of the person recruited. This has been successfully done in government programmes - like the Mahila Samakhya for instance. The child care worker should be like, and paid at par with, the Mahila Samakhya's *sahyoginis*.

The *bal-patshala* will be
managed by the *mahila dals*,
who will monitor its
functioning. A village woman
recruit will be trained
for five years
to run the *patshala*

- Conduct regular training programmes that would emphasise playway methods and the creativity of the teacher/child care worker. The most positive effect of this would be that the teacher-worker stops getting bored. Once they begin to have fun, and enjoy themselves, they inevitably teach better, feel empowered and absenteeism drops. Aspects of training should be combined for the school teacher and child care worker to begin a process of integrating them. Central to all the above, is the focus on changes in attitude, through sessions on personal growth and meditation.

9 EPILOGUE

A personal note

It may be a coincidence, but I did spend the summer of '94 travelling in Garhwal and Kumaon, and among other things, looking at balwadis supported by the Uttarakhand Seva Nidhi. I saw balwadis in Kumaon, and the Chamba and Chamoli districts in Garhwal, run by different NGOs. I was impressed with the balwadis I saw in Daniya, near Almora, which have been run by the Laxmi Ashram in Kausani. Like SIDH, they seemed to me to place a lot of emphasis on playway methods, and using sensorial materials. The others, I found, tend to teach only by rote - reading charts aloud etc., which makes for bored teachers and children. But, from several discussions with representatives of NGOs and others, it seemed that there is an attitude that is dismissive of the use of play materials and child-centred methods as an urban elite import, and as an indulgence that they can ill-afford in the circumstances in which they work.

This attitude needs to be explored and discussed with the agencies involved. Perhaps the hidden curriculum of authoritarian teaching methods is to demand submission to authority and it is no coincidence that we find such methods popular and prevalent in rural and working class areas. Is the privilege of learning to question authority and think independently only to be limited to our elite schools as a matter of policy? If the politics of the hidden curriculum could be brought up and discussed with other child care agencies, it might have an impact on current policies and practices.

Is the privilege of learning to question authority
and think independently only to be limited
to our elite schools?

Appendix 1

A NOTE ON JAUNPUR

SIDH is working in about 30 villages of Jaunpur block in the Tehri-Garhwal district of U.P. It is in the central Himalayan region, in an altitude range of 3000-7000 m. above sea level. An *adivasi* block in the north-west of Tehri district, Jaunpur, unlike the adjoining Jaunsar-Bawar area, has never been officially declared a tribal area. Jaunsar Bawar was declared a tribal block in 1967, and has reaped the benefits that go with that official status ever since.

Jaunpur is by all classic indicators a 'backward' area with irrigated land being less than 3%. Socially also, it has been relatively isolated from mainstream Garhwali society, with its own language, culture and customs. Economically, it is primarily a subsistence economy, though over the years, with land degradation, the people only manage to grow enough for 7 months in the year and have to supplement their income through selling milk and working as labourers in Mussoorie.

The villages tend to be far-flung and relatively inaccessible because of the terrain. The average village size is between 7 to 35 families, which has an impact on literacy, since numbers determine the number of schools opened. Literacy has traditionally been very low in this area : the average literacy rate for UP is 55%, and for hill areas in UP it ranges from 71% to 82% for men and from 23% to 59% for women. Compared to these figures, the literacy rate in Jaunpur is a surprisingly low 30.82% for men and 12.10% for women. (Census 1981) Therefore, unlike other hill areas, the men do not migrate to the plains to work and the communities continue to be relatively well-knit.

Compared to other communities, Jaunpur women are relatively better off: custom accepts the change of marriage partners if they so desire on payment of a token bride price. Income from poultry , goats and wine (only sold locally in the villages) traditionally belongs to the women to spend as they wish.

Appendix 2

TEACHING/LEARNING MATERIAL DEVELOPED BY SIDH

1. Audio Cassette of Balwadi Songs (Action songs, Language, Numbers and Environment)- some Hindi adaptations of popular rhymes, some specially written about issues dealing with the environment.

2. A book of environmental songs and stories - a collection of songs and stories for little children about the magic and mystery of the environment. Contents range from stories about rainfall, life cycle of a butterfly, how a seed grows, story of the soil, hygiene, and the growing danger of plastic bags. The book hopes to trigger creative ideas in teachers for many more stories and songs based on everyday things in a child's world. The introduction to the book gives a guideline on how to make a curriculum around environmental themes. (Rs. 5)

3. *Hamari Balwadi* - A beginner's manual for teachers on how to begin a balwadi. It clarifies the concept of a balwadi and provides a guideline for building

- a conducive learning environment
- the routine activities and
- management of the balwadi.

It also contains directions on how to make low-cost sensorial material, a time-table and the need to make it according to the short attention span of children. A chapter on building community support and on health and nutrition is included, as well as some ideas on and how to extend the balwadi into non-formal classes. Appendices on different kinds of songs, games, stories, job description of the balwadi teacher and a check list for balwadi evaluation are also given. (Rs 30)

4. Balwadi Calendar - This is a planner for the teacher and also a monitoring tool, giving the minimum levels of learning for three groups in a balwadi from 2-1/2 to 6 years. The three groups are based on learning ability and not age of the child, and changed whenever the child is ready for it. In the first group, there is a lot of emphasis on songs, stories and EPL. In the second group, there is emphasis on learning language and numbers with the help of games and sensorial materials. In the third group (outgoing group) there is emphasis upon recognizing and writing of words and numbers. Each month there are learning levels given for EPL, Language, Numbers and general

knowledge. There is also an environment theme around which stories, poems, games, projects, art and craft and other activities are to be strung together. Simple ways on how to expand one word into activities are also given. (Rs 10)

5. *Balwadi Sahayika* - A Balwadi Teacher's Diary that has the following records :

- a profile of the children
- lesson plans
- home visits
- creative inputs
- care and making of material
- PTA meets
- attendance, problems and suggestions
- experiences

6. *Mein* (Me) - A workbook for children of Class 1 to be used where older children come to the balwadis.

Appendix 3

DAILY TIME TABLE

Activities	Group	Time
Fetching the children, welcome	-	-
Cleaning the balwadi	-	-
Washing the children (toilet training)	All	30 min
Prayer	All	-
Shanthi Khel	All	-
Attendance	All	10 min
Dainik Baat (informal chat)	All	10 min
Learning activities in small groups		
(EPL, Language, Numbers)	Small	15 min
Swatantra Khel (free play)	Small	25 min
Recess (tiffin)	All	30 min
Action songs	All	10 min
General Knowledge	Small	10 min
Language/numbers through charts	All	10 min
Story	All	10 min
Drawing	All	10 min
Outdoor games/nature walk	All	25 min
Mangal Maitri	All	10 min

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Appendix 4

TRAINING

SIDH has spent a great deal of time and effort in training their team members in a variety of skills like running a school, balwadi, non-formal and adult education classes, preparing the curriculum and lesson plans, teaching methods and preparation of teaching materials. The team members have been exposed to health care and preventive measures.

Training has been organised to give them information/exposure/skills in conducting village surveys, interviews, PRA (Participatory Rural Appraisal) TOT (Training of Trainers), team building, management and income generation activities eg., production of candles, chalk, incense sticks etc. Some team members have trained in animal husbandry and poultry farming techniques. SIDH also organises training programmes for villagers on compost-making, water-harvesting techniques and bio-gas technology. *Vipassana* meditation is encouraged in the team and almost all members have gone to at least one 10-day course in this meditation practice.

SIDH lays great deal of stress on personal development. A contemporary training workshop might begin with participants recollecting and narrating childhood memories. These are analysed within the group, with particular emphasis on children's fears and the incidents are turned into stories for children by the participants. Alternately, they may begin by classifying their problems - recently four major problem areas were identified:

- cleanliness
- personal leadership qualities
- village interactions
- use and repair of sensorial materials.

Each category is then broken down into further segments and the points raised are discussed within the group. Other methods used are role playing, feedback and analysis by other members within the group.

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The SURAKSHA series documents innovative programmes of Early Childhood Care and Education in India, especially those which address the intersecting needs of women, young children and girls. Carefully researched and written by scholars in the field, each study looks in depth at one programme, highlighting its achievements, philosophy and goals. The series as a whole represents the rich diversity of experience within the country, with a range in terms of geography, auspices and organisational pattern. Scholars and students of Child Development and child welfare would find the series an invaluable source of information, as well as policy makers, voluntary agencies and others concerned with programming for women's and children's development.

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SURAKSHA

Early Childhood Care and Education in India

FOR THE SAKE OF THE CHILDREN

PS 02 4132

NGO - Government Partnership in Child Care

Kashyap Mankodi

Urmul Trust, Bajju

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SURAKSHA

Early Childhood Care and Education in India

Volume 4

FOR THE SAKE OF THE CHILDREN

NGO - Government Partnership in Child Care

by

Kashyap Mankodi

Monograph Series No. 4
M.S. Swaminathan Research Foundation
Madras

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FOREWORD

Every human being ultimately is the product of interaction between the genotype (inherent genetic make up) and the environment. While heredity determines potential, the home, health and educational environment determine whether young children bloom or remain "blossoms in the dust". There is a well-known saying - *as the twig is bent, so the branch will grow.* It is in this context that Early Childhood Care and Education assume critical significance with reference to giving the child an enabling environment for the full expression of his/ her innate potential for physical and mental development.

I am happy that through the SURAKSHA series of publications, a careful chronicling of the many excellent examples of Early Childhood Care and Education in India is being undertaken. This series will enable scholars and researchers as well as policy makers and practitioners to learn from the rich diversity of experience available within our country in this field. Such an understanding is fundamental to learning from successes and thereby helping to replicate effective and economically viable models of day care.

This series has been lovingly put together and is the result of close cooperation among the many people who have worked hard on it. On behalf of the Foundation, I must particularly thank the members of the Advisory Committee, who have given unsparingly of their time and effort, the distinguished scholars who have written the case studies, the agencies whose work has been documented and the Aga Khan Foundation (India) for their support.

M. S. Swaminathan

M.S. Swaminathan

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- the reviewers, who have been a tremendous source of strength in maintaining quality but have of necessity to remain anonymous

and

- the many others, all of whom it is not possible to list, for their constant support which made this series possible.

EDITOR'S NOTE

The SURAKSHA series has grown from an idea which has been germinating for a long time. Scholars have long felt the need for documentation of Early Childhood Education Care and Education programmes in India. While there has been a wealth of experience in the country, with many small-scale experiments under the leadership of outstanding thinkers and educational leaders, it has been realised that hardly any of it has been recorded for a wider public.

The vast diversity in the situations of women and children in the country implies that child care services, especially day care, would vary widely in response to local and specific needs. At the same time, programmes for young children, by their very nature must be highly personalised, direct, small in scale, and rooted in local culture and relationships. Diversity and responsiveness to needs are hence an essential characteristic of successful programmes for young children. In the last two decades, with the rapid expansion of child care programmes like the Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) in the State sector, it has become all the more important to draw the attention of policy makers to the importance of the flexibility and responsiveness represented by these multiple approaches. Documentation has thus emerged as an essential tool for advocacy.

It was with the twin objectives of dissemination and advocacy that Project ACCESS embarked in 1993, with the support of the Aga Khan Foundation (India), on the project entitled **Multiple Approaches in ECCE in India**, with a view to bringing out a series of studies documenting innovative approaches to ECCE in India. Dr.T.S.Saraswati, Head, Department of Human Development and Family Studies, M.S. University of Baroda, who has for long been urging the need for such documentation, was an incomparable guide and adviser in launching the project. With the help of an Advisory Committee consisting of distinguished representatives from several disciplines, ranging from Child Development and Education to Management and Women's Studies, criteria were drawn up for

selection of programmes to be included in the series and procedures were developed for a participatory process of documentation.

The series of case-studies represents a wide range of experiences in terms of geography, auspices and structure. The locations range from the Himalayan region to the coastal South, from industrial metropolis to rural or tribal hamlets. The programmes are run by diverse institutions — voluntary agencies, trade unions, educational institutions and women's groups. The programmes include spontaneous private efforts as well as statutory obligations and government / non-government partnerships; they are employer-funded and union-sponsored, school-based or community based. The common element is a commitment to address the intersecting needs of women, young children and girls. In addition, each programme is need-based, client-oriented and responsive, a system of optimal size with a minimum life of three years, caters to lower socio-economic groups and is non-profit making in nature. The series title SURAKSHA was chosen for its rich resonance implying an all-embracing, nurturant care, visually represented in the logo; while the colour of each cover is intended to evoke the specific geographical context.

The process of developing the studies has been a participatory one, involving a researcher/writer working closely with the agency concerned, and providing opportunities for sharing and mutual learning among the agencies through a network and occasional meetings. The studies are process-oriented in nature and not merely descriptive, focussing both on the unique features and the replicable aspects of each programme, finances, sustainability, the child care worker, the organisational structure and relevant linkages. The concluding part in each case dwells on implications of the programme for wider policy initiatives for young children. An overview of the economics of child care is expected to follow the last study in the series.

This study takes a frank look at the organisational dynamics underlying the relationship between government and NGOs struggling to run a child care programme in partnership. Since conventional wisdom favours turning over of social services to NGOs, the "partnership" theme has become important enough to be the focus of this and one more study in the present series.

Taking off from an old Buddhist fable, and set deep in the sparsely populated desert area near the western border of India, the narrative unfolds as the bitter-sweet tale of a marriage torn apart by stresses and strains. While the style is cinematic and the tone satirical, the argument is hard-hitting and the points well taken. Issues of quality, cost-effectiveness, accessibility and sustainability are addressed, but always contained by the imagery of the tale.

Entering into the spirit of the story, one notes that the partners seem ill-matched from the start. On the one hand, the ICDS – a monolithic uniform pattern, conceived from above and implemented with rigid adherence to the rules; on the other, an NGO trying to respond to the needs and problems of the specific situation, eager to involve people in participatory planning from below, in evolving a location-specific model. Can such a pair survive? There are snatches of a vision, of how it might be if the two could meet on common ground; but the dream is still distant. Yet in the end the partnership holds together, like many a marriage at risk, *for the sake of the children*.

This volume establishes that a case- study of ECCE need not necessarily be in the form of an academic treatise: for those who have ears to hear, stories have lessons to teach. And in the Indian tradition, the teller of tales was revered as a teacher.

April 1995

Mina Swaminathan
Series Editor

FOR THE SAKE OF THE CHILDREN
NGO - GOVERNMENT PARTNERSHIP IN CHILD CARE

• •

ABOUT THIS VOLUME

The Author

Kashyap Mankodi was educated at the universities of Bombay, Pune and Cornell. He has been a teacher of linguistics, a researcher in language, philosophy and social science, an activist and consultant for the social and environmental impact of large developmental projects. Till recently, he was directing the Arid Zone Environmental Research and Resources Centre within Urmul.

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1 INTRODUCTION

AMBAPALI

Ambapali was a woman of promise who was a courtesan in the royal court. A travelling bhikkhu who met her decided to stop and get involved with her in order to reform her and bring her back to the path of virtue, dharma. The end result was that Ambapali remained a courtesan, but the bhikkhu lost his chastity.

- Buddhist tale

The problem with planning from above, it is generally recognised, is that the best of schemes for the community, if implemented without taking the community into confidence and by a bureaucracy with insufficient commitment and motivation, gets diluted and distorted and fails to deliver.

It is also generally believed that voluntary organisations often have higher levels of commitment and motivation and achieve a much better rapport with the community in which they are active, compared to a faceless and distant bureaucracy.

So what happens when an elaborate scheme designed by planners at the highest level, but hopelessly mired in bureaucratic delivery, is given to a voluntary organisation for implementation ?

Will the orientation and culture of the voluntary organisation prevail to make the programme successful, or, as in the well-known Buddhist tale of Ambapali, will the voluntary organisation make compromises and become more procedure rather than objective oriented and acquire the protective coloration of the government bureaucracy?

These questions are important for various reasons:

- A new implementing agency for an existing scheme may provide an opportunity to learn whether observed problems are of design or delivery.
- Useful feedback may be available about whether the scheme has adequate built-in flexibility to achieve its aims independent of routine implementation methods.
- Documenting such an experiment could provide a valuable record of the ups and downs that a partnership between the governmental and the non-governmental is usually exposed to.

- Finally, it could provide an opportunity to reflect and learn, certainly for the voluntary organisation, and hopefully also for the government.

The present case study seeks to document the experience of one voluntary organisation, the Urmul Rural Health Research and Development Trust, with one such scheme, viz., the Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS). While voluntary organisations have a long and glorious tradition of working with children - and women - on their own, what concerns us here is a distinct phase in voluntary action, the effort of one voluntary organisation to implement creatively a scheme designed by the state.

The impetus - if not the political compulsions - behind the ICDS, the careful planning and learning from its numerous precursors, and the fine-tuning it has undergone since its inception in 1975 is too well-known to need reiteration here. (see Appendix 1) Responding to a global concern about demographic trends in its population and its health status, armed with the latest currents of thought about how best to address population and health problems, and the wisdom of hindsight after a quarter century of planned development for women and children, the state had come up with the scheme. It was an operationalisation of national policy planned at the highest level, vast in scope and ambitious in content.

How did a non-governmental organisation (NGO) like the Urmul Trust get involved in implementing the ICDS ? And what is the Urmul Trust ?

What concerns us here is a distinct phase in voluntary action,
the effort of one voluntary organisation to
implement creatively a scheme designed by the state.

2 THE STORY TILL NOW

The palace

Once upon a time there was a Scheme. And the Scheme was palatial. The number of rooms in the Scheme was legion. It was designed for the Empress by the best available help from the world over. Each room adjoined every other room. And each room had a window through which you could see into every other room. And there was a room for every conceivable purpose: monitoring, evaluation, research, malaria, tuberculosis, leprosy, smoking, nutrition, family planning, administration, associations and organisations, development, primary health care, drinking water and sanitation.

The roof of the Scheme was a marvel of architecture. It rose in a crescendo of hope and ambition to a pinnacle where, bathed in a mellow golden glow, rested Mother and Child Health. Tucked away under the roof was a cleverly designed hard, false ceiling of Population Control. The Scheme had been designed from the top down, so that every room had a ceiling plan instead of a floor plan. This marvellous edifice of planning, this breathtaking superstructure of such exquisite workmanship had only one minor problem. It had yet to be anchored to the ground.

A stake had been driven here and there and work was in progress elsewhere, but the search was on for buttresses and walls, preferably with scope for window dressing. And so it was decided to seek the support of NGOs.

Now it so happened that tucked away in one corner of the country was an NGO, and Urmul Trust was its name. And it was asked to give a hand with the Scheme.

Urmul and its corner

The area within which Urmul Trust has been active is located in the Thar desert. Extremes of temperature and aridity and a sparse population scattered over an extensive and inaccessible terrain, consisting largely of shifting sand dunes and very limited cultivable land, make it a particularly inhospitable place to work in. Sources of drinking water, vegetation cover, electricity, transport, communications, medical and educational facilities as well as opportunities for subsistence are all very limited and undependable. Inevitably, there is a considerable movement of population.

This area, chronically exposed to droughts and famines due to the very limited scope for rain-fed cultivation, had been going through the throes of a sudden and massive transformation due to the advent of irrigation through the ambitious Indira Gandhi Nahar Pariyojna (IGNP), a colossal canal project entailing the settlement of a large population and the spread of irrigated farming.

Urmul Trust was founded at a time when vulnerability to droughts in the area was yet unchanged, though the social and economic upheavals caused by the introduction of surface irrigation and its impact on the environment - both physical and human - were already being experienced on a large scale. For example, the traditional family was disintegrating and the workload, especially of women, had increased, while cash cropping had impoverished the diet of women and girls. Waterlogging was making cultivation difficult for many. Traditional occupations like nomadic pastoralism were under stress, and no longer as viable as they used to be.

The work begins

Urmul Trust was established by members of the Uttari Rajasthan Milk Union Ltd. (URMUL), a dairy co-operative based in Bikaner, initially with the mandate of providing primary health and educational services in the far-flung villages of the milk collection area. First conceived in 1984, it became operational in 1986, and was registered in the following year.

Soon after becoming an autonomous body, the Trust decided to target its activities at the underprivileged sections of the villages, particularly women and children, instead of remaining a service delivery organisation for the relatively more affluent members of the milk cooperative. In the wake of the serious drought of 1987, Urmul Trust became involved in a range of other activities like employment generation through public works to supply drinking water, on-farm as well as off-farm income generation programmes, fodder banking and fodder farms, and advocacy campaigns to focus attention on the impact of the Indira Gandhi canal project in the area, besides new programmes in health and education.

Over the years, the geographical spread of Urmul Trust's activities has also grown to cover large parts of western Rajasthan, and it has become restructured as an umbrella organisation of decentralised autonomous units often working with particular groups like farmers, weavers, pastoralists, and migrant labourers. The three main campuses are located in Lunkaransar, Bajju, and Phalodi. There is a liaison office in Bikaner town, as well as a retail outlet for the sale of handicrafts made by different units, which is located in Junagadh Fort. (See Appendix 2 for a brief history of the Urmul *parivar*)

Funding for the Trust's activities was available from a variety of sources, including government and international funding agencies. A wide variety of experience and skills were available in-house, and an attempt was made to maintain high motivation levels, team spirit, and the ability to grow with introspection in a friendly, non hierarchical atmosphere.

Increasing work load

Who cares ?

Urmul Trust has believed in targeting its activities towards the rural poor and women, and its ideological focus has been towards the raising of awareness to encourage community self-help. To date, it has tried to chart a course between development schemes within the existing administrative and legal structures and mobilising the community to confront iniquitous, inefficient, or corrupt elements within existing power relationships. It has also been striving to hasten the transition from being a localised service delivery set-up to an expanding community, empowering and support organisation.

The Bajju Project

Due to the original umbilical relationship with URMUL, Urmul Trust's geographical expansion had followed the location of URMUL's chilling plants. The Bajju Project was started in 1988 with the setting up of a basic primary health care programme, including a sophisticated management information system. The widening of the spectrum of activities within the Bajju Project largely followed Urmul Trust's earlier experience in Lunkaransar, with education, income-generation programmes, and agricultural programmes soon following the initial health-related activities.

However, there was a greater need to integrate the various programmes and activities of the Bajju Project and decentralise them to reach the target community, given the major differences in demography and settlement pattern between the area of operations of the Trust at Lunkaransar and Bajju. Vertical programmes fanning out of a central campus base were hardly feasible for logistical reasons in the Bajju Project area, where population density was among the lowest in the country.

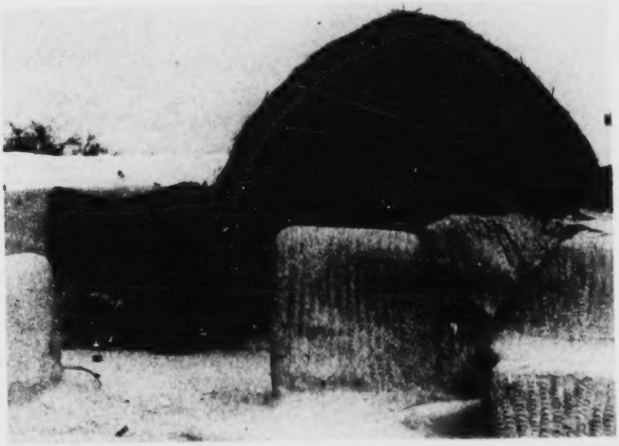
Urmul Trust activities at Lunkaransar had started well after irrigation had become available in the region from the first stage of IGNP. In the Bajju area, which falls within the second stage of IGNP, irrigation was only just being introduced around the time the Project started. In the event, Urmul Trust was getting increasingly aware and concerned about what irrigation was doing to the land and people in Stage I of IGNP, and the new Bajju Project offered a challenging opportunity to try to forestall some of the irreversible problems observed in Lunkaransar.

Bajju was a very small village with very limited facilities when the URMUL chilling plant, and, subsequently, the Bajju Project campus were located there. It is just under 100 kilometres from Bikaner. The village was poised for growth as a small market town, located as it was within six kilometres of the IGNP main canal; but the momentous changes that the progress of construction in Stage II of IGNP was bringing about, were spread over a large area, chiefly on the right bank of the main canal.

Thus, the Bajju Project needed, soon after its inception, a programme which could help set up a large number of village-based centres which could offer an integrated package of services, besides enhancing the resource capabilities of the campus. In the 25 or 30 odd villages where health-related activities, had been undertaken, and where village level staff was already in place, the funding for the health project was soon going to run out and a related project which could provide funds to continue supporting the staff, especially a project from the government, looked particularly attractive.

Such village centres were needed most in the large tracts of hitherto barren land on the right bank of the recently constructed main canal of IGNP Stage II where the settlement of population was taking place, and where the Trust had started its activities. This area was vast, inaccessible, and had among the lowest population densities anywhere in the country. Unlike the compact villages which grow in most places when habitations proceed at a normal pace, the accelerated settlements in the area surrounding the Bajju Project followed the logic of agricultural colonisation. Hence, the new settlements consisted largely of homesteads on agricultural plots allotted along the canal network, and were thus isolated and unconnected by any roads. The settlers were mostly from outside the area.

Such then was the state of the unsuspecting NGO, trying to find its feet in a new area, when the affair began.



An isolated homestead

3 THE AFFAIR BEGINS

The plot began to thicken in the rarefied atmosphere of the Rajasthan Government Secretariat in Jaipur, when the volume and urgency of the reminders from New Delhi kept growing until they became too much to bear. So, Delhi was serious about this scheme? No -one, not one mandarin in the whole Mantralaya, disputed it. However determined the government in Delhi was to make this nuisance scheme of its a people's programme, there was one major problem. How to locate reliable NGOs?

It was not as if there wasn't a precedent - ICDS was already being implemented by another Jaipur-based NGO, the Jaipur Health Trust. But that programme was on its last legs, with both parties frustrated, the government because targets weren't fulfilled, and the NGO because grants weren't released on time.

Overtures

Just then someone remembered those smart, good-looking young girls who sometimes came to the Secretariat. Weren't they doing something about health or TB, or something, somewhere in some villages? Hadn't they shown interest in the ICDS? Weren't they somewhere in Bikaner? The search was on. From early 1990, the prospect of Urmul running the ICDS in Kolayat began to take shape. Initial contacts were followed by mutual sizing up. In October 1990, a charming lady from Jaipur arrived in Bajju, to case the joint. She came, she saw, and she was conquered. She talked to the Urmul Trust staff and the women in the distant villages, and she talked of the ICDS. The prospects seemed bright for a happy outcome. In a made-for each-other situation, a match seemed to be in the offing.

Considering the number of marriages which flounder because the first flirtatious gesture was misinterpreted, it is important to stop and ask what actually happened. What did the prospective partners think each was getting into? To all evidence, the government had nothing to complain about, no cause for any concern. Here was the real thing, no mere letterhead, no fly-by-night operator with a nose for money and an ear to the ground. So an offer was made, and there seemed reason to be more optimistic this time around than the last, when it had tried to implement the ICDS through an NGO in Rajasthan, and everybody had not lived happily ever after.

But what did the Urmul Trust think it was getting into? What did it feel?

Was it excited? Did it experience shy delight, like a bride-to-be? Or trepidation, because the fallen woman with her past was more than likely to turn out to be an incorrigible shrew?

Agonizing

Whatever else Urmul Trust may lack, it never lacked open debate. There were always the compulsive questioners and self-searchers, there were always the regular, if meandering, meetings, and hence there were always passionate discussions, and they were treasured. During the monthly meeting in Lunkaransar in November 1990, the ICDS proposal was thrashed out at great length. To accept or not to accept, that was the question. What were the pros and what were the cons?

Though even back then no one saw the ICDS with starry eyes, it is easy enough, in retrospect, to see why it seemed sensible at the time to take it up. So what if it was a fallen woman, wouldn't she be useful as a hand-maiden?

Bajju was close to the international border. Working there with foreign funds could make us look suspicious. Here was the government, to which people apply for work with but faint hope, actually offering us work. So why not accept it, if not for any other reason, for the legitimacy it would bestow, the credibility it would enhance, and the freedom from foreign funding? And wasn't it work that we were already doing? It was not as if we would have had to do something altogether different. In fact, it was almost embarrassing, as in the joke about prostitutes and scientists, being paid to do what you would like to do anyway.

To sober the enthusiasts, the wise conscience-keepers of Urmul Trust cautioned against impetuosity. Was the scheme compatible with the Urmul philosophy? Wouldn't accepting it necessitate making compromises eventually? Would trying to work with the whole village dilute our commitment to work selectively with the most disadvantaged? Was there no danger of becoming, in fact or in people's perception, tainted collaborationists? Would our potential to protest be compromised? And could we do it on the scale required, wasn't it beyond our capabilities to start working in so many new villages suddenly?

Bajju was close to the international border. Working there with foreign funds could make us look suspicious. Here was the government, to which people apply for work with but faint hope, actually offering us work. So why not accept it?

In the end, as so often happens under such circumstances, valour prevailed over discretion, and it was decided to accept the offer. And as happens even more often, the decision was made for the wrong reasons.

Two considerations had decided the issue. One was the question of the alternative : if we don't accept the offer the government will run the scheme itself, and we can well guess what will happen. Any potential benefits of the ICDS will perish in the quagmire of bureaucratic dishonesty. If we do it, however incompetently, we will do it sincerely and, hence, better. There was nervousness but there was also hope.

> The Trust decided to accept, insisting on certain conditions. One was that it would run the ICDS in its own way.

The other consideration, though perfectly understandable, was even more fatal. All along there had been a feeling that the government's offer somehow proved that Urmul Trust had finally arrived. That the offer was like a reward, an honour or recognition bestowed virtually for the first time to an NGO in Rajasthan. There was no underestimating the onerous responsibility that rested on our backs now. But, unfortunately, there was still too much room for self-congratulation, and the seductive notion that we were being given something valuable, something from which we could only gain.

The conditions

The outcome of all the agonizing was inevitable. The Trust decided to accept. It however decided to insist on certain conditions. One was that it would run the ICDS in its own way. The six distinctive features visualized were :

i. complete freedom to select staff;

ii. local procurement of supplementary nutrition;

iii. development of an alternative training module, which sought to replace the 90-day-long, single stretch, 9-to-5 programmes held in teaching institutes with one held in the field, a 55-day programme which compressed the standard curriculum into three intensive short periods sandwiched between hands-on work experience and attention to domestic responsibilities;

iv. a ratio of 1 supervisor to every 10 anganwadi (AW) centres, instead of the standard 1:20, in view of the terrain;

v. stress on pre-school education instead of nutrition; creation of an interesting and educative environment within the centres by equipping them with toys and learning materials;

vi. community involvement in selection of AW locations and workers, and in their maintenance;

vii. integration of the scheme with other activities of Urmul Trust, and targeting it at the lower strata of village society.

A second condition was that in order to run it smoothly, it would ask for money in advance. And finally, it would select the work area as well as the workers on its own. Honour satisfied, conditions stipulated, innocence unimpaired, the Trust was raring to go. From then on events moved rapidly – well, about as rapidly as they can in the government.

The pact

Several things could have soured the honeymoon before it began, but were not allowed to. One was the fact that the ICDS in Kolayat Tehsil had actually been sanctioned on 31 March 1990 to be run departmentally, but had not worked. Hence, far from giving honour or recognition, or transferring a valuable resource, the government was only trying to save itself some nuisance.

But to Urmul, in its quixotic zeal at the time, it could only provide further evidence that the bureaucratic delivery system was hopeless, and not only could the job be done, it could be done better, and in a manner that would help consolidate Urmul's ongoing work. So the second straws in the wind went unnoticed. At any rate, a team from Urmul went to Jaipur on 3 July 1991, detailed discussions were held over the next two days, and an agreement was signed to hand over the ICDS to be implemented between 16 July 1991 and 15 July 1993 by Urmul Trust. The deed was done.

With the conditions it had insisted on being accepted, Urmul felt at the time that it had been met more than halfway, and it was therefore unlikely to feel cramped for elbow room. A scrutiny of the formal agreement reveals, however, that it was structured as a document to regulate the handing over of resources which were by implication valuable, and whose ownership continued to vest with the government. The agreement formalised the availability of these resources to Urmul Trust for a limited period under strict prescribed conditions.

Urmul had agreed to run the scheme on a no-profit-no-loss basis, but without an escape clause. The government had reserved the right to terminate the agreement unilaterally with a 37-day notice, but at the time Urmul had not considered it necessary to provide for any safety net for itself. What would happen if, for some reason, running the scheme were to cease being profitable was not a question that it considered necessary to address at the time.

With the conditions it had insisted on being accepted, Urmul felt at the time that it had been met more than halfway.

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4 THE HONEYMOON : 1991

The two year experience of Urmul Trust with the ICDS can be broadly divided into three phases, which can be labelled as the honeymoon, hard chores, and belated realisation. Though, since early 1990, Urmul had been hoping to get the ICDS, it was only after the whole thing was signed and sealed in July 1991 that it could be sure of it.

But, the government had not bothered to wait for the formal pact. Jaipur wrote to the ICDS field man in Churu in May 1991, weeks before the signing of the agreement, about the allotment of the ICDS to Urmul Trust, authorizing him to transfer to it the equipment received for the project from UNICEF.

Reconnaissance

There was a flurry of activities in each camp even if of different orders. Let us first look at what happened in the Urmul camp. No sooner had Sanjoy, Dinesh, Kailash, and Gulshan returned from Jaipur, after negotiating hard and successfully, than a team of 8 Urmul staff members left for a quick study tour of ICDS centres in nearby areas. On 10 July the team reassembled in the Lunkaransar campus of Urmul to discuss the findings of their trip to Sardarshahar and Churu to observe the operation of government-run ICDS centres.

After a day-long discussion it was concluded that the reasons for the failure of these centres were :

a. lack of clarity about the ICDS and its aims and objectives;

b. the location of the centres in the house of the worker;

c. the supervisors' perception of their role as that of an auditor, one who sits in judgement on the performance of the AW worker, rather than one who helps along;

d. total lack of knowledge and involvement of the village community in the ICDS centre;

e. laxity about the age group of the beneficiaries;

f. absence of women's involvement; and

g. excessive workload on workers as well as supervisors.

Preparations

Meanwhile, a letter was dispatched to Jaipur to find out when the budget would be made available, and whether it would cover the preparatory activities including the innovative methods of staff training and orientation, as well as of securing people's participation, that were being finalized. On 1 August 1991, a letter was given by Urmul to the ICDS officer in Churu from whom charge was to be obtained, requesting him to transfer the budget amount for two months, to cover the expenses that were being incurred.

On 7 August, a workshop was organized in Lunkaransar in which, besides ICDS bigwigs from Jaipur and elsewhere, representatives of NGOs who were involved with the ICDS in other parts of the country, or who could offer specialized training, were also present. Thus there was someone from Sewa Rural in Gujarat, Mobile Creches from Delhi, Chetna from Ahmedabad, and Jagriti from Udaipur, besides staff from the medical college in Bikaner. This sharing of experiences not only helped in upgrading staff capabilities, but also built up morale, especially when not only the other NGOs but the ICDS bigwigs also assured full cooperation to make Urmul's ICDS project a successful model. Soon afterwards, survey work was started in 53 villages. Between August and October 1991, at the peak of the honeymoon, spirits were high, activity still furious-paced. On 3 September, a training session was organized for Urmul staff at the medical college in Bikaner.

This sharing of experiences not only helped in upgrading staff capabilities, but also built up morale, especially when not only the other NGOs but the ICDS bigwigs also assured full cooperation to make Urmul's ICDS project a successful model.

Meanwhile, there was no word from Jaipur or anywhere else about any action on the part of the other party. What was happening? When the deed was done and action had advanced so much, what was holding up the dowry?

Negotiating the dowry

By standards prevailing there, there had been pretty hectic action in the other camp too. As already mentioned earlier, Jaipur had not even waited for the signing of the agreement before writing off in May 1991 to Churu to transfer ICDS to Urmul, including the equipment received from UNICEF for the project.

However, in spite of several requests both from Urmul and Jaipur, Churu was most reluctant to give up ICDS. Meanwhile, Jaipur transferred the budget to Jodhpur, authorizing it to countersign. Its letter to Urmul in October contained instructions for transferring the budget, and for the first time information straight from the stable, that administrative expenses had been transferred. It also had some ominous advice. Money for workshops like the one already organized two months earlier was not available from the ICDS budget. As far as the plans for stimulating popular participation were concerned, all the suggestions Jaipur had to offer was that it must be done by the book.

With Churu still being evasive, Jaipur sent it a telegram on 14 October instructing it to hand over all the project equipment to Urmul. It also wrote to Delhi to include Urmul in the NORAD-funded panel of NGOs for implementing the ICDS. But it was not going to be for another month that Urmul would get its dowry.

The Homemaking

From Urmul's point of view, the *Jattha* was definitely going to be the high point of the honeymoon. The *Jattha* was an attempt to present the scheme to the village community and clarify any doubts through the medium of songs and street theatre and impromptu meetings.

In October and November, ten or fifteen workers from Urmul visited around 25 villages. During the day they talked to men and women and in the evenings there would be an entertainment programme during which the ICDS was explained. The questions posed were : Whose scheme was it after, all? Who was to be responsible for its smooth functioning? Who was responsible for the bureaucratic hijacking of the scheme? And so on.

The desired outcome of this blitz was the election of the AWW and her helper by the village community on the spot, if possible. Irrespective of whether these were elected on the spot or not, a committee comprising responsible villagers was invariably formed which undertook to oversee the Anganwadi, and make some sort of contribution to it, be it in the form of accommodation or firewood, or whatever. This was to be the linchpin of Urmul's ICDS project.

One of the most serious problems to beset the ICDS in Urmul's area gave a

Anganwadi chores

preview to the *Jattha* of the shape of things to come, when it was found that many villages were deserted because despite poor rainfall, most people had migrated to the *chaks* to till their land, and were waiting for the harvest now. Seasonal agricultural migration was one phenomenon that this over-elaborate scheme had not provided for.

Even where the villages were not deserted, and the people were not all strangers, the *Jattha* often failed to arouse any enthusiasm that could be expected to translate into committed action over a long period of time. Somehow, the development of women and children failed to excite people the way livelihood issues like land or employment could.

While the Urmul ICDS team was busy with the *Jattha*, Jaipur invited Urmul to a meeting with the Collector in Kolayat to be held on 12 November to finalize coordination arrangements. In a briefing note prepared for the meeting, Urmul promised to start the centres by the beginning of December 1991 and hoped that it would be able to run a model scheme. For this purpose, it solicited the cooperation of the Panchayat Samiti and the Primary Health Centre. It also pointed out that the project had not yet been handed over to it and expressed a doubt that providing locally procured supplementary nutritional diet could lead to cost overruns.

It was discovered during the meeting that the ICDS was finally being officially transferred to Urmul on that very day. Accordingly, the following 'dowry' was officially, formally, and finally handed over on that day.

Table 1 **The 'Dowry'**

1.	113	Weighing scales
2.	1	Jeep
3.	4	Seat covers
4.	4	Curtains
5.	1	Trailer with tarpaulin
6.	1	Large steel table
7.	3	Small steel tables
8.	12	Chairs
9.	1	Steel cupboard
10.	1	Large steel cupboard
11.	3	side racks
12.	25	Anganwadi Centre boards

The blue and white Govt. of Rajasthan jeep, with 16,218 kilometres on the clock and 25 litres of diesel in the tank, was to play an important role in Urmul henceforth.

The desired outcome of this blitz was the election of the AWW and her helper by the village community on the spot,

Toys for learning

Later, a team from the Trust went for a study tour to Gujarat, to observe and learn from the experience of the Bhansali Trust, an NGO which was implementing the ICDS in 7 Tehsils. It was noted that the work there was oriented towards charity and not towards organizing the people and securing their cooperation, as with Urmul. ICDS workers were also found to be comparatively better paid there. Urmul wrote formally to Jaipur, agreeing to take on ICDS.

Urmul Trust agrees to get involved in the training and inspection of the ICDS, and can specifically be of assistance in the following areas:

- *Computerized MIS*
- *Health Services and Training*
- *Informal Pre-School Education*
- *Project Management.*

Seasonal agricultural migration was one phenomenon this over-elaborate scheme had not provided for.

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5 HARD CHORES : 1992

The honeymoon was now definitely coming to an end. Almost before the Urmul ICDS team had returned from their study tour of Gujarat, Jaipur wrote demanding to know which were the Anganwadi centres opened by Urmul, and who were the workers appointed there. Urmul had, after all, promised to start the centres by the beginning of December 1991. The time for fantasies, celebrations, and preparations was now gone, and Urmul had to start thinking in the target achievement mode. The easy assumption that they were all set in 25 to 30 villages and would only need to spread in as many more over the next year or two was now going to be put to the test.

Basic Principles

In December, a meeting of the team was held when some of those who were going to be the Anganwadi workers were also present. It was decided to start centres at the beginning of the new year according to the strategy finalised after the study tours and subsequent discussions. This strategy visualized, apart from giving wide publicity to the scheme as had already been done through the *Jattha* in a couple of dozen villages, the following basic principles :

1. The AW worker was to be elected by the village community.

2. The location of the centre was also to be finalised in consultation with the community.

3. A committee of prominent villagers was to take full responsibility for the centre.

4. Local foodstuffs were to be used for supplementary nutrition.

5. The village should provide fuel and water for the centre.

6. Supervision was not just to keep an eye on the AW worker, but to help her succeed.

7. Of all the different components of the scheme - growth monitoring, immunization, health and nutrition - maximum stress should be laid on pre-school education, and under

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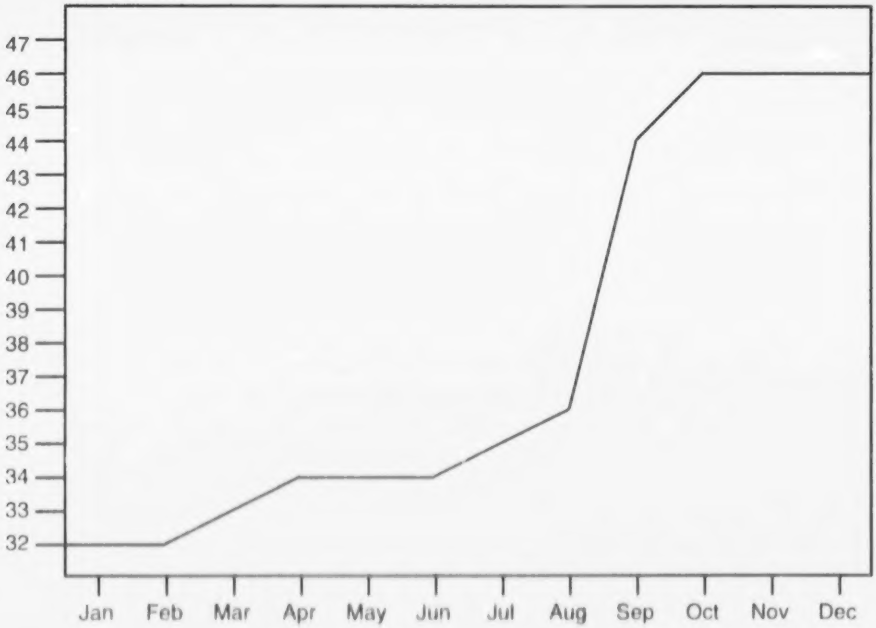
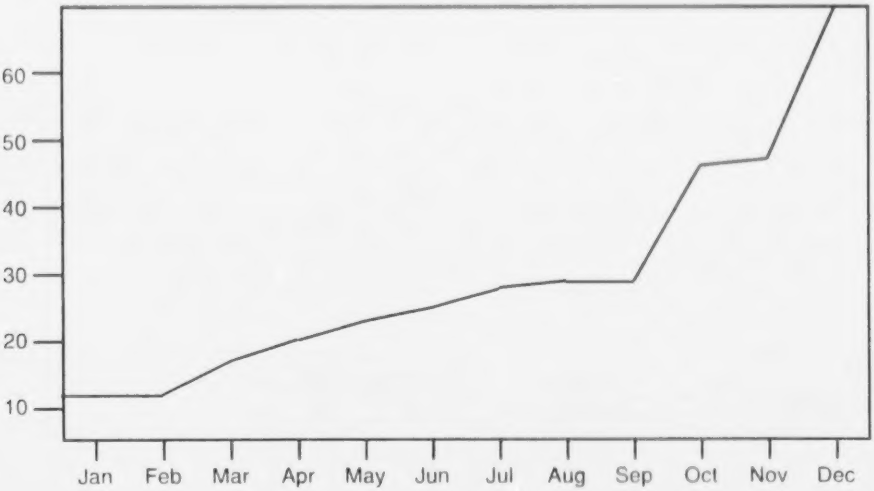


Fig 1 No. of centres opened in 1992



- No. of centres operating in December 1993 : 84

Fig. 2 No. of centres opened in 1993

no circumstances was the project to be allowed to degenerate into what was derogatorily referred to as a *khichdi-dalia* programme.

8. The AW worker and her helper were never to be from the same house.

Opening Anganwadis

The advent of 1992 saw an earnest attempt to start new centres. The plan was to aim for around 100 centres by the end of two years. Hence, it was necessary to start and consolidate about 25 centres every six months. It was planned to begin with a higher number than the 25 that were to be established at the end of six months, in case there were going to be any that did not come up to scratch, and would therefore have to be closed down. How the opening of centres actually worked out in practice is shown by the graphs on the total number of AW centres opened by Urmul during 1992 and 1993. (Figs.1 and 2)

It was believed at the outset that since the 25 or 30 villages in which Urmul was already active would present no problems, the real challenge would arise only when new centres would need to be opened in new villages. However, with the target for the first six months already under the belt so to speak, there was enough lead time and there seemed no cause for any anxiety.

There were three steps involved in opening AW centres – identification of AW workers, training and equipping and supervising the centres.

I. Identification of AW workers

Four main channels were used in the selection of AW workers:

a. identification by the village community during the *Jattha*

b. absorption into the ICDS of village-level health workers already working with Urmul, with the health project coming to an end

c. taking on a few workers from the short-lived government-run ICDS in Kolayat

d. recommendations from relatives or friends who were with Urmul

II. Training

The training of these candidates was held at Bajju and lasted ten days each time, during which the participants lived on the Urmul campus. Six such training programmes were held, during January and July 1992, and January, February, June, and October 1993. Resource persons for the training consisted mostly of Urmul staff, but also included experts from other organisations.

The curriculum included an introduction to the scheme and its rationale, mother and child health, immunization, nutrition, growth monitoring, and basic child development and pre-school education, besides procedural orientation and community organization. The typical training schedule followed a fixed pattern.

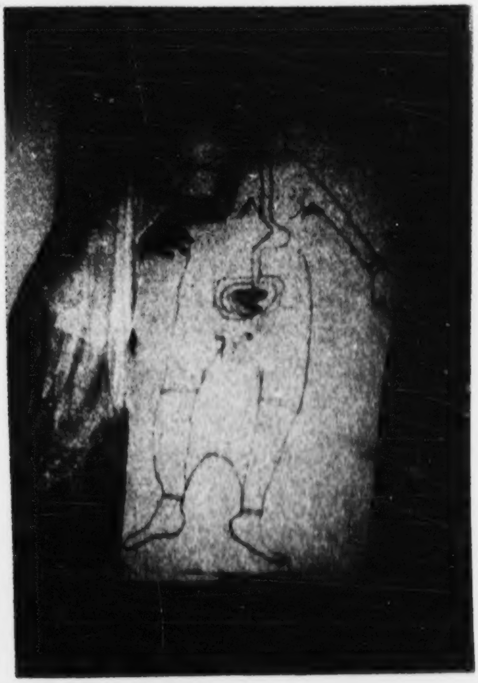
Day 1 : What ICDS is, and who it is for. Child development and the need for preschool preparatory activities.

Day 2 : Immunization, why, how, and the schedule. What supplementary nutrition is, and why it is needed.

Day 3 : Growth monitoring, weighing and plotting in chart. Pre-school activities - songs, story-telling, toy-making, use of wall charts.

Day 4 through Day 7 : Revision and reinforcement of topics covered during the first three days.

Day 8 : Contacts with the community, how to do surveys.



Indigenous teaching aids

Day 9 : How to encourage community participation, the formation of village *samitis*, and the place of the AW worker in it. Record keeping for attendance, growth/ weight, and stocks.

Day 10 : Recapitulation.

During the ten days there was intensive interaction among the participants between 8 in the morning until 10 at night, with three breaks for meals. Since 65% to 70% of the trainees were only marginally literate, the training process mostly involved oral communication in the local language, and learning by rote, with the maximum use of songs and dance, both as mnemonic devices, and to overcome the trainees' inhibitions and to prepare them to play a new role more easily and effectively.

Maximum emphasis was on facilitating pre-school activities like group singing, dancing and play, and the use of waste material to make recreational objects. This was closely followed by immunization, nutritional status, and growth monitoring. Special care was taken to stress the idea of supplementary nutrition, and to make it clear that what was to be provided at the centres was not a full meal.

The training of the AW workers provided quite a challenge, given their background. Apart from being only marginally literate, many, if not most of them, were experiencing such a prolonged stay in unfamiliar surroundings for the first time in their lives. Under these circumstances, to ensure their attention and interest in the proceedings and make it an enriching experience, to ensure that they could define their new work role and changed status, and affirm these so that they could be motivated to function in their villages as AW workers, were not always easy.

III. Equipping and supervising the centres

Initially the actual job of opening centres, equipping them and supervising their operation was quite an elaborate one, and was done very conscientiously. The continuing involvement of the village community in helping out with the centres was insisted upon. The actual location of the AW centre, keeping it supplied with fuel and water, and keeping an eye on the staff were all the responsibility of the village.

In 1992, the centres were opened in correspondence with the training programmes for the AW workers. But, in 1993, centres continued to sprout in small numbers throughout the year, like unseasonal flowers, and were no longer linked with the training programmes.

At the beginning of the project, the main job of the supervisor was conceived as one of ensuring that the entire sequence of identification, training and orientation of AW workers, and the equipping and local supervision of the centres proceeded smoothly, and that the children from the village came to the centres on a regular basis. Making sure that record keeping by the AW staff was accurate and regular came next in order of priority. Supplying supplementary nutrition, and toys and other material for preschool education was considered the least important part of the job.

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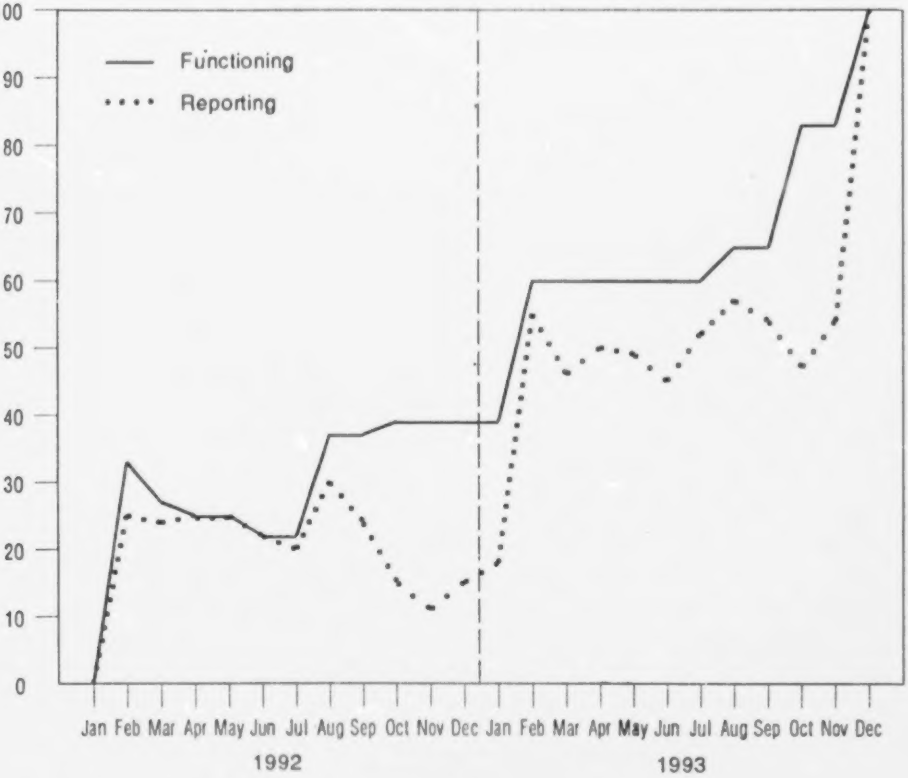
6 THE ANGANWADIS

In the first training session, 44 potential AW workers had been trained. Out of these, 33 opened AW centres in February 1992. In July 1992, a second training programme for new AW workers had been organised, for 19 potential workers. Thus, during the second half of 1992, the total number of centres increased. Fig. 3 shows the rise and fall of AW centres through 1992 and 1993.



* Actual no of centres functioning & reporting in Dec 1993 : 113

Fig.3 Rise and fall of centres - 1992 and 1993

It would seem from a casual perusal of these figures that, barring the initial hiccups caused by the missionary zeal of having nothing short of " model " AW centres, the rate of expansion of the number of centres remained on course, and except for the sudden jump at the end, the increase in the number of centres was nice and steady, thus suggesting that the initial idea of maintaining the highest standards of quality in the AW centres could not have come under any serious stress.

By the nature of the ICDS,
the battle between quality
and quantity was always going
to be a losing
one for the former.

The difference between functioning and reporting centres was a bureaucratic artifice to distinguish those centres on which money was being spent but about which little else was known, from those whose AW workers turned up at monthly meetings, and hence about which more could be found out. Sometimes several AW workers found it inconvenient to attend monthly meetings, hence reports for the month showed fewer reporting centres than functioning ones. The question was not whether the centres functioned or not, but how they functioned, how they were supervised, and what this entailed for Urmul's style of functioning.

Quality versus quantity

Initially there was enough euphoria left over from the honeymoon to determine the Urmul team's style of functioning. The team often worked late into the night and worked with fire in their bellies. The objective was to create a model, one that could be admired and emulated. Hence, nothing short of perfection would do. The supervisors tried to do everything right, and did not cut corners. There was also a healthy but fierce competition between them to outdo each other.

Early on it was decided in a meeting that there would be decentralisation of decision-making which was the only way to ensure that the person on the spot, the supervisor who could see what was happening, could enforce quality norms. Quality was still the name of the game, and considerations of quantity were deliberately eschewed.

However, as an indication of the health of the centres, the discrepancy between the number of functioning and reporting centres is quite revealing. What they disclose is that, by the nature of the ICDS, the battle between quality and quantity was always going to be a losing one for the former. Urmul was to find that in trying to grab quantity while jealously holding quality in its hand, it was perforce going to have to lose its grip on the latter and, to add insult to injury, was to find itself in the famous Brazilian monkey trap.

Table 2 **Life expectancy of AW centres**

	Still-born	**Happily ever after**	**Neither**
1992			
February	9	11	12
March	-	-	1
April	-	1	-
July	-	1	-
August	-	1	-
September	-	5	3
October	-	2	-
Sub-total :	9	21	16
1993			
February	-	11	1
March	-	5	-
April	-	3	-
May	-	3	-
June	-	1	1
July	-	3	-
August	-	1	-
October	-	17	-
November	-	1	-
December	-	37	-
Sub-total	0	82	2
Total :	9	103	18

The problems that afflicted the centres were many and varied. Before discussing these, it would be useful to examine the life expectancy of AW centres. Table 2 shows the month of opening of the centres and their life expectancy. Of the 18 centres that were neither stillborn nor survived continuously, 12 were revived - 10 once, and 2 twice - whereas 6 were closed down at some point. Of the ten revived once, 7 lasted less than 6 months, 2 between 6 and 12 months, and only 1 for over 1 year. The ones that were revived had not necessarily functioned for longer periods, and most were only revived in a fit of desperation in December 1993.

Morbidity and infant mortality among the AW centres

The single most serious problem was the settlement pattern resulting from seasonal agricultural migration, to begin with, and later the settling down in *dhanis* or isolated farm homesteads of people from the old villages on a permanent basis. As stated earlier, the first batch of centres was located in the command area of the IGNP canal where Urmul was already active. The period in question - viz., the first half of 1992, when the largest number of AW centres languished - coincided with the reaping season of the *hadi* crop of 1991 and the sowing season of the *sawani* crop of 1992 and, hence, most people had moved to their *dhanis* or farm houses which are scattered over a large area. Thus, the target population was too dispersed for the centres to be viable. The number of children who could be targeted and offered benefits through the scheme was too small.

Another factor was the sudden availability of alternative wage employment following the advent of canal irrigation. Not only did the demand for wage labour on irrigated farms increase along with wages, but new types of work which did not exist earlier also became available now. Hence, some of the trained AW workers decided, for example, to work in forest department nurseries where more money could be earned.

A third element which was as important as any other, and which continued to play havoc with the expansion plans for the centres in all sorts of overt as well as covert ways, was caste. To begin with, the centres were located on the right bank of the main canal in the command area where a large population of Sodha Rajputs had been settled. These people, who had originally lived in Pakistan and who had been displaced by the war in 1971 and subsequently settled here from their refugee camps, were very conservative when it came to education or work for women. Amongst them no women who had received even basic schooling could be found, and had there been any who were literate, or were prepared to be schooled, they would be unwilling or unable to work due to social pressure. Hence AW centres could not be opened in this area.

Foeticide

Funnily enough, the emphasis on quality and the spirit of competition among the supervisors were other factors that were against the survival of the AW centres. If you wanted to show that you were not merely hardworking but also strict, and did not suffer fools gladly, you went around looking for centres to close down. Thus, when P., who thought a particular AW worker did not show enough spit and polish, found during a series of frequent supervision visits to the centre that not only did the centre sometimes open half an hour late, but also that some of the children who came were more than six years old, down came the axe. Not to be outdone, another supervisor keen to score an equally large number of hits would also be on the lookout for transgressions. Does this AW centre's attendance register show 30 children? Count carefully now. What, only 29 present, and the register shows 30? Good. A cardinal sin, that one. Let us make an example of it. And down comes the axe.

Their motives were also occasionally more practical than the maintenance of the highest quality. In one case, for example, the supervisor had to walk nearly 22 kilometres to the AW centre when there was no jeep available. Hence, it was much simpler in the long run to supervise the centre well once and forever, instead of over a long period of time. Need more be said about the foeticide among the centres?

The caste factor

Caste continued to queer the pitch for the AW centres in other ways. In some villages like Sheruwala, antagonism between caste factions made it impossible to agree to a location for the AW centre which would be acceptable to all.

In some villages, if the AW worker happened to belong to a 'higher' caste, an attempt was sometimes made to exclude needy children who belonged to 'lower' castes from attending the centres and availing of the feeding programme. In one case, where the majority belonged to the 'lower' caste of Meghwals, an attempt was still made by 'higher' caste Rajputs to capture the AW centre and relocate it within their part of the village.

However, the outcome was not always unhappy, howsoever unanticipated it may have been. The example of village Gajjewala is a case in point.

Bhuribai's triumph

Gajjewala is a village close to the western limit of the area of operation of the Bajju project, touching the border of Pakistan. Urmul's health programme here was implemented by Bhuribai, a bright, toothless sweet old lady of 70 plus, who was a traditional midwife belonging to the caste of Meghwals, considered untouchable by those who belonged to the so-called 'higher' castes. Though she was quite obviously as intelligent as anyone else and more competent than most, because she was uneducated, she was not considered qualified to become the AW worker. However, being an asset to the programme and being in need of support in view of the impending termination of the health project, it was decided to absorb her in the ICDS as a helper to the AW worker.

This was, however, not acceptable to the community in Gajjewala, comprising mostly of 'higher' caste Bishnois. Their objection was not to having Bhuribai work in the AW centre, but to the fact that as the helper in the centre she would be handling and cooking the food that would be served to their children. How could such ritual pollution be allowed?

Hence Bhuribai, despite being illiterate, was appointed the AW worker. Her 'higher' caste helper did all the donkey work of rounding up the children, cleaning, and cooking, while Bhuribai took it easy and enjoyed the lavish salary of Rs. 250 per month, as against her socially superior helper's Rs. 100 per month!

Other primordial relationships besides caste also sometimes affected the AW centres. In one centre, the AW worker was the mother-in-law of the local teacher. The teacher's and the AW worker's paths had to cross, but since interaction between sons-in-law and mothers-in-law was taboo, the centre was closed down.

Increasing pressures

Meanwhile, the pressure from government to deliver was growing. There was a flood of correspondence from Jaipur whose thrust was to suggest that it did not really matter what Urmul decided to do to make the ICDS qualitatively better as long as quantitative norms were met.

For example, when Urmul sought to explain that because it had rained, people had moved to their *dhanis* and hence a sufficient number of children could not come to some centres and therefore these centres had had to be closed down, the Mantralaya mandarins had asked if it had rained only in Bajju, and nowhere else!

The government's point of view was understandable. It was not as if they were allergic to Urmul's staunch refusal to doctor records. They may even have appreciated it. But their hands were tied too. There was no way within the standard ICDS reporting procedures, based as they were on the axiom that once a centre always a centre, to account for such fluctuations of number, for the demise and resurrection of the same centre. In their scheme of things, either a centre existed or it did not exist. There was no middle ground possible. If a centre existed, expenditure could be incurred on it. If it had ceased to exist, the money earmarked for it would have to be returned to Delhi.

Decentralisation of decision-making was the only way to ensure that the person on the spot, the supervisor, who could see what was happening, could enforce quality norms.

7 BELATED REALISATION : 1993

How much stress the proposition that Urmul's ICDS was distinctive, superior, and more successful vis-a-vis government-run ICDS programmes was subjected to, until it came dangerously close to becoming a fiction to be maintained as an item of faith, is a story that naturally spills over from the narration of hard chores to that of the dawning of "wisdom after widowhood".

The euphoria of 1991 had been replaced during 1992 by the realization that opening the contracted and agreed upon number of centres was not going to be easy. The ICDS offered opportunities that were attractive, but the smallest unit or area within which implementation of the scheme could be considered was the block. To open the required number of centres for the block, it had been assumed that the area within which Urmul had already been working would be unproblematic. However, as we have seen, for reasons of geography, demography, culture and socio-economic changes occurring in the area, this assumption was proving hopelessly wrong.

Making compromises

Inevitably, the first casualty was the objective of taking up the scheme. To make a dent on the health and well-being of women and children, and to tie up all of Urmul's activities in Bajju nicely together through the ICDS, soon became of secondary importance. The only thing that mattered now was to have the required number of centres.

The tragedy of terminal targetitis began with Urmul giving up its commitment to its chosen area of operations. To start the required number of centres and to meet the programme's population based norms, Urmul had to shift its emphasis both geographically and functionally.

Rather than working in the area on the right bank of the IGNP main canal and setting up strong multi-programme centres, Urmul had to start working in far flung villages in other parts of Kolayat Tehsil, far from the canal and the area where work was most needed. Since it did not have any other programmes in place here, all these new centres became single programme centres.

Without being able to spend a sufficiently long time in consolidation before considering any expansion, as it had done with its other programmes like agriculture or income generation, it had to follow a time-bound expansion schedule with the ICDS centres. Giving up consolidation for rapid horizontal expansion stretched its logistical capabilities by making impossible demands of transport and staff time for supervision.

Falling standards

A comparison between AW centres from the early batch and those from the later batches which were opened under the pressure of meeting target deadlines is instructive. Centres from the early batch retain a distinctive character which is markedly different from that of the newer centres.

Only after the formation of the village committees, and their acceptance of the responsibility of overseeing the running of the centres, were the older centres actually allowed to open. These centres are, therefore, more vibrant and there is a wider spectrum of activities going on in them. Their committees continue to be more active; and consequently there is minimal supervision, and practically no special encouragement for the AW workers is called for.

> The change in the mentality of the supervisors was one of the steeper costs Urmul has had to pay.

In the newer centres which were hurriedly opened under duress, the village committees were formed afterwards, more as a formality. These have, therefore, never done well. They are also more prone to resemble standard government-run centres with poorly committed AW workers, most at home in a partnership involving surliness on the one hand and bureaucratic mediocrity on the other.

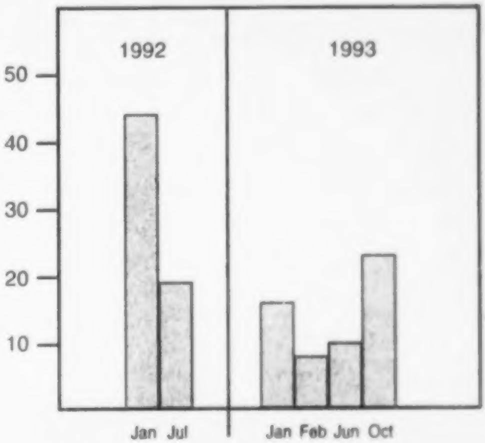


Fig.4 Timing of Training Courses

Since these centres were started under the pressure of meeting time-bound targets, the appointment of AW workers and their training had to be often scheduled when labour demand was at a peak. (Fig. 4) Their response was therefore poor to begin with, and continued to remain so.

The unfortunate result of this was the change that naturally came about in looking at the task of supervision. Supervisors no longer remained friends, philosophers, and guides of the AW workers who helped them in the job of winning the confidence and cooperation of the village community. They became auditors come to take account from the AW workers.The change in the mentality of the supervisors was one of the steeper costs Urmul has had to pay.

Further, the villages where the earlier centres were located were thoroughly surveyed, and their inhabitants were known. Hence, built-in tensions due to caste or factionalism were more easily negotiated. With the new centres, on the other hand, the village community was an unknown factor. Since the village committees to oversee the centres were also more notional than real, this exposed the new centres to all sorts of ups and downs.

Earlier, there was never any doubt that whether the supervisor was looking or not, the centres would function. Now, some centres may have become like the philosopher's table which disappears when no one is looking.

Sadly, with the pressure of time, the survey itself became another formality, a nuisance requirement to be got out of the way, rather than an instrument to obtain an understanding of village society. Would it be surprising to discover, under the circumstances, that bundles and bundles of survey schedules from the new villages lie neglected, unanalysed and unutilised, in the ICDS office in Bajju?

Growing distance

Not unexpectedly, the distance between the AW workers and the supervisory staff grew. Whereas earlier, the supervisors invariably went personally to the AW centre to replenish the stock of supplementary nutrition, and weighed it in front of the AW worker before having her sign the acknowledgment slip, now as often as not the provisions are weighed in Bajju and sent impersonally with a driver who dumps them at the centre.

The AW workers are acutely aware of all this and sometimes complain of a feeling of isolation and helplessness, because they get little or no support from the defunct or dormant village committees on the one hand, and also find the supervisors drifting further away from them.

Earlier, there was never any doubt that whether the supervisor was looking or not, the centres would function. Now, some centres may have become like the philosopher's table which disappears when no one is looking. In staff meetings, colleagues, who stay in some of the villages where ICDS centres are located in connection with other programmes, report the hasty assembling of the AW centre when the Urmul jeep is sighted, as also of AW workers occasionally appropriating provisions meant for the centres for personal use.

Whereas earlier any bungling in accounting for the provisions received by the AW invariably brought forth strict disciplinary action like deductions from the AW worker's salary, or even the shutting down of the AW centre, now occasionally the supervisors are even ready to make up for the shortfall out of their pockets, rather than risk rocking the boat.

Then and now

Also gone are the days of working tirelessly day and night, and actually enjoying it. Granted the ICDS staff still work very hard, bur it has become - figuratively, if not literally - 9-to-5 work. Supervision routes and schedules keep going haywire because everybody wants leave and convenient extended weekends away from work as often as possible.

Perhaps, the earlier orientation towards work was neither sustainable nor even wise. Working at feverish pitch to achieve perfection rather than establishing a steady pace to be able to sustain good work betrays ignorance of the wisdom enshrined in the French saying about the perfect being the enemy of the good.

If well begun is half done, the team that had begun so well had not stayed on to see that the other half got done too. Only two or three of the original full-time ICDS team in Urmul had continued through till the end. The others had either dropped out or transferred to other projects. No doubt, others had joined somewhere along the line, and some arguably better trained and qualified to do the job, but the turnover has had repercussions on the levels of motivation, preparedness, and commitment, not to mention the ability to function as a team.

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8 THE PRICE URMUL PAYS

Because supervision is no longer what it used to be, and supervisors no longer relate to the AW workers in the same way that they used to, or maintain close personal contact with AW workers any longer, many centres wear a look of serious neglect. Without the supervisors' leadership and guidance, the AW workers are as likely as not to see some of the equipment at the centre as costly assets that they will be held responsible for, rather than as aids to be used routinely. Hence, toys and charts remain packed and safely out of the children's reach. Solar cookers remain unused and in disrepair.

Changing relationships

Moreover, the relationship between Urmul and the AW workers gets redefined. Often enough now, the AW worker is no longer the outpost of the Urmul family in the village, but a lowly paid employee to be dealt with firmly. Recently, a large number of AW workers had been taken along to Bikaner city for some celebration by Urmul. The lodging facilities there were somewhat basic, since the number of people involved was quite large for the small budget available for the purpose. When the AW workers refused to accept the arrangements, they were threatened with immediate dismissal to make them see reason. Perhaps there were other considerations, and too fine a point need not be put on what was after all a trivial incident. However, the question does arise whether a collegiate partnership is slowly turning into the relationship between a firm management and recalcitrant labour. And if that is indeed the case, then whether implementing the ICDS has not slowly transformed Urmul into a minor government sub-contractor, with the appropriate mind-set, is also a question.

This fear is only strengthened when we consider the final cost that Urmul has had to pay. This cost is perhaps the least tangible, but, nevertheless, the most serious of all - the

Often enough now, the AW worker is no longer
the outpost of the Urmul family in the village, but a lowly,
paid employee to be dealt with firmly.

final compromise, so to speak. It involves the acceptance of poor performance, learning to live with the second rate. Urmul had undertaken to implement the ICDS fully realizing that it may not be able to do it as well as it would like to, but it had decided to try its best. Now, increasingly, it finds that what it is doing is just not good enough, but thresholds of tolerance for the mediocre have grown, and it has learnt to live with it.

An attempt to categorize the AW centres according to performance is still made.(See Appendix 3.) According to the latest available figures, 30 AW centres were in category A , 20 in category B and 15 in category C, whereas survey work was going on in 18. (Fig.5) This seems reassuring, until it is realized that even some of the least efficient centres were categorized as 'A' because the appraisal is made subjectively by the supervisors, and, what is much worse, the criteria for classification were diluted to begin with. In point of fact, not a single centre satisfies all the criteria for belonging to the 'A' category. There are few active village committees overseeing or provisioning the centres, no women's organisations, centres wear a look of neglect, and yet there is very little serious concern about it. Why did this state of affairs come about ?

It involves the acceptance of poor performance, learning to live with the second rate.

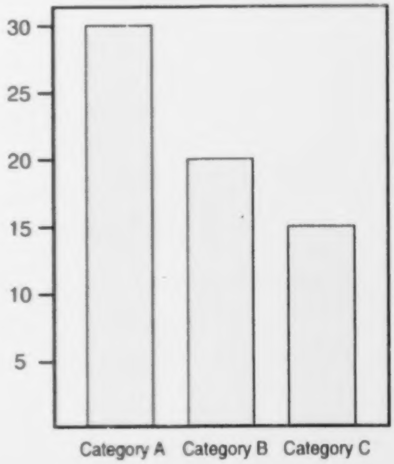

Fig.5 Categories of AW centres

Coping with the shrew's demands

The problem with the ICDS is that it is too carefully planned and formulated. An NGO implementing it is left with no elbow room to appraise local problems and address them creatively. All initiative and originality is blunted, and the overriding concern is with conforming to norms and standardised requirements. It no longer matters how well prepared the staff of the implementing agency are to perceive local problems and how innovatively they can solve them. All that matters is how familiar they are with the ICDS norms, rules, regulations, and procedures, and how faithfully they can conform to them, or at least pretend to do so. It is a scheme designed to obliterate the distinction between the governmental and the non-governmental.

At the time of reporting, the Urmul ICDS team comprises 16 full-time members all told, and others available on demand, besides the AW workers and their helpers in the 113 centres. Thus, the H.Q. staff to AW centre ratio works out to be 1 : 7, which on the face of it does not suggest an impossible workload, or an adequate explanation for the dilution of supervision standards. That is, if the specific reporting demands the project makes are not taken into account.

Form filling

Consider the reporting requirements, however. The proforma for reporting what is happening can be best classified by periodicity. There is, to begin with, a village survey form which is a one-time affair. It includes the following information : village profile; household composition; health and immunisation status of children under six; mortality register; reproductive history of women between 15 and 44, previous and current childbirths, pregnancies; immunisation, nutrition, contraception, and health status; land, livestock, other sources of income, production and assets; and local skills. It would be very useful to use this as a benchmark, and update it from time to time, but that is never done.

Next comes an unbelievable range of reporting forms. One is the basic AW stock register and monthly report form, a densely printed 4-page spreadsheet, on which, for every single day, is a detailed breakdown of every category of beneficiary, a similar inventory of every single commodity and a summary of those receiving supplementary nutrition that is spread over 28 columns and 9 rows, or 252 cells, plus a summary of items received and utilized, and sundry other details like a detailed breakdown of discarded polythene bags, gunny bags, paper envelopes, containers, and cartons.

Then, once every month the AW worker has to fill, in duplicate, another form which details every thing that happened during the month, a summary of her daily form. This form also offers her the rather quaint choice of reporting whether she spent 30 minutes, 1 hour, or 1 hour and 30 minutes daily on pre-school activities.

Inevitably, the supervisors have to spend considerable time on helping the AW workers to cope with their paperwork. This does not absolve them, however, from the paperwork that has to be done at headquarters. There are five different forms to be filled every month, and these are to be filled up after scrutinising the detailed and complicated forms described above from 113 different AW centres.

There is one form for summarising the supplementary nutrition provided and the beneficiaries covered; one for describing all activities from toy banks, mahila mandals, adult education, family planning, construction, small savings, to the celebration of health days; another for showing separately how many scheduled caste beneficiaries benefited and for summarising all supervision activities; and yet another to be filled up to describe all staff sent for training, and the staff position.

Lest something should happen that goes unreported, the CDPO has to send, in triplicate this time, a really detailed pre-coded five page monthly progress report. And, finally, the AW worker has to fill, only in duplicate, a six-monthly progress report which pulls out all the plugs and demands a total picture, in a really densely printed form, of the preceding six months as well as a perspective plan for the following six months.

Office space and time

The forms and reports pertaining to ICDS activities only occupy part of the 110 files of varying thickness that may be seen in Urmul's ICDS office. Of equal 'weight' is the volume of correspondence that arrives in a steady stream from Jaipur for Urmul's instruction and edification. Has the Chief Election Commissioner rapped the Chief Secretary of Uttar Pradesh on the knuckles for publishing an advertisement? Send Urmul a copy. Is some special day to be celebrated? Is there an 'own your own moped' scheme? Is there a ban on smoking in public places, on the purchase of different newspapers in languages other than Hindi? For heaven's sake send Urmul a copy, they will love it.

This flood of edifying circulars - there are over 70 to date - take up limited office space and valuable staff time which is spent on reading and filing them. There is, besides these, the relatively less idiotic office correspondence which has to be attended to, even if it is usually irritatingly curt. What do you do when you are told that more than the sanctioned number of children cannot attend the AW centres, even if they are there, and are otherwise eligible, just because they have no theoretical right to be there, since the sanctioned number is based on demographic calculation?

Currently ICDS makes the largest demands on office space, staff time, and transport, of all Urmul's programmes in Bajju. What is worse than this colonial expansionism, however, is that this proliferation of meaningless chores blunts local initiative and creativity, and breeds a conformist mind-set. This then is terminal targetitis, the losing sight of goals for milestones, and of objectives for procedures.

Currently ICDS makes the largest demands on office space, staff time, and transport, of all Urmul's programmes in Bajju.

Mounting losses

For all the demands made by ICDS on Urmul, did it at least pay ungrudgingly and amply? Apart, of course, from the expected bureaucratic problems in satisfying all the procedural requirements for having the money released - chartered accountants' certificates, letters of authority, prescribed formats, deadlines, etc. - what is more upsetting is the inflexible attitude of the government when it comes to sanctioning expenditure that has already been incurred, and is quite legitimate, but which the government finds procedurally irregular.

For example, a sum of Rs. 15,100 was spent on the purchase of containers to store AW provisions, and buckets and mugs for drinking water at the centres. Provision for a grant of Rs. 1000 per AW centre is included in the budget which was given at the time of signing the agreement, but the amount was not sanctioned by the government because advance permission to incur the expenditure was not obtained at the beginning of the financial quarter. Similarly, Rs. 8118.40 paid as stipend to AW workers was not reimbursed because certain details about the workers had not been sent in advance.

When Urmul sent a minibus to Delhi to purchase toys for the AW centres, enough toys for all the sanctioned AW centres were naturally purchased together, in order to achieve economy of scale, though the number of functioning AW centres at the time was somewhat smaller. Consequently, the full amount spent on the purchase of toys was not reimbursed, and again Urmul was out of pocket.

The two items on which Urmul loses most money are foodstuffs for the supplementary nutrition and fuel and lubricants for transport. According to the rules for implementing the ICDS, the diet for supplementary nutrition must be doubled in caloric value, but not in volume. Urmul gives double the volume to meet the calorie requirements. It is difficult to keep within the cost allowed per beneficiary (till recently 0.65 paise per day) using local foods, and Urmul subsidises the government on this account.

The ceiling on POL (petrol, oil, and lubricants) for the financial year April 1992 to March 1993 was Rs. 30,000, whereas the actual expenditure was about four times that. The transport norms are completely unrealistic for difficult desert conditions.

The other items on which Urmul had to spend out of pocket during 1992-93 were AW workers' training and stationery, a combined total of over Rs. 27,000. During 1993-94, up to October, it was estimated that cost overruns by Urmul that will not be reimbursed would be as follows :

POL	:	Rs. 45,000
Stationery	:	Rs. 10,500
Training	:	Rs. 23,000

The Brazilian monkey trap

Urmul has complained to Jaipur about its unhappiness that the evaluation of the entire programme has been purely on grounds of quantitative and financial target achievement. Due to delays in remitting the money for the project and due to deductions made, Urmul has invested over Rs. 5 lakh of its own money in the ICDS to keep it afloat, a far cry from the no-profit-no-loss basis on which the programme was going to be run.

Despite having failed to achieve many of the aims with which the ICDS had been accepted for implementation, and despite paying a substantial cost for having done so, Urmul found that it has not only sunk a large amount of money in the project, but has also developed a large number of commitments and dependents in the villages for which it was necessary to continue running the scheme.

It is said that in Brazil they catch monkeys by leaving nuts in an open bottle. When a monkey tries to grab some nuts, it finds that it cannot remove its fist from the bottle. Unwilling to give up the inviting looking nuts, it will not empty its fist and get away, and is thus caught. In this case, Urmul has been caught in a different way. It had not reached for the ICDS with empty hands. Now it has dropped what it had in its hands in the bottle, and still finds itself unable to get away.

Yet, it has dreams that it can find a way out.....

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9 FOR THE CHILDREN'S SAKE

Urmul's dreams

What Urmul would really like to do to make the ICDS centres viable in the sparsely populated second stage command area of IGNP are the following:

1. Drastically reduce the ratio of the number of children to the number of AW centres.
2. Organise a system by which an AW worker can fetch eligible children from their *dhanis* on a 'pre-school' bus - a tractor trolley, may be - to the centre, since children cannot be expected to negotiate the distances on foot.

> The partnership between Urmul and the ICDS will continue to bring about, surely if slowly, improvements in health and development among women and children.

3. Assign the responsibility of running the AW centres to some selected members of *mahila mandals* on a rotational basis instead of to a full-time worker.
4. Arrange for the AW centres to somehow travel with their intended beneficiaries during agricultural or labour migration.

Urmul took up the challenge of implementing the ICDS and other state government schemes to develop sound institutional linkages at the village level, based on a core of community participation and a sense of ownership, and focusing on qualitative aspects of the programme. With the renewal of the programme for a further period of three years, the partnership between Urmul and the ICDS will continue to bring about, surely if slowly, improvements in health and development among women and children.

Some rewards

For all the pains described here, there have been gains too. In a recent inspection report by the Jaipur Directorate, the achievements of the partnership have been lauded, and it has been admitted that, on its own, the government may not have been able to implement the scheme in Kolayat. Urmul has acquired the confidence that it could, after all, implement the scheme in a much larger number of villages than it had been used to working in before, even if at a cost.

There have been other serendipitous discoveries. Young women from an SOS orphans' village, employed as ICDS supervisors and trained on the job, have not only effortlessly assimilated into the extended Urmul family, but shown an exceptional aptitude to relate to anganwadis. Perhaps this experiment could be attempted elsewhere.

Miles to go

Meanwhile, the routine goes on. It is another day in the life of the ICDS in Bajju. Though its a chilly winter morning, the ICDS team has hurriedly finished breakfast to head for the village to be visited today. A year ago, all AW centres were located within an average distance of 25 to 30 kilometres of Bajju. Now, since the number of centres was abruptly raised, the average distance of the centres from Bajju has increased to over 65 kilometres. The breakfast has to be hurried through because there is the jeep to start yet.

The battered blue and white jeep will need a running push start, and on a cold morning like this, in the loose sand, it is never easy. You could hardly blame the poor thing at that. Though, from time to time, Urmul has used nine other vehicles for routine ICDS related jobs, the blue and white has borne the heaviest burden of them all, having run over 100,000 kilometres, not to mention one cow, and one deer.

Twice already it has literally collapsed under its workload with multiple fractures of its chassis, and it is only in its registered identity the same jeep, for, physically most of it has been overhauled and replaced several times over, mostly due to wear and tear, but twice due to road side brawls, once with a truck, and once with a culvert.

Its destination today is Gajner, over 70 kilometres towards Bikaner. As the jeep is finally persuaded to start and it revs up in a cloud of sand and diesel fumes, the silence of the morning is shattered by the lusty, if somewhat breathless, cheering of the ICDS team. They pile in, and the jeep departs, but the haunting melodies of the songs of hope and the joys of struggle that they will sing all the way to their destination linger.

EPILOGUE

This case study has no recipe to offer for a successful implementation of the ICDS scheme everywhere. It has been offered more as a moral tale for the protection of the chastity of bhikkhus, rather than as a formula for the reform of courtesans. If, in the process, any courtesans are morally uplifted, the effort will not have been entirely wasted.

Appendix 1

INTEGRATED CHILD DEVELOPMENT SERVICES:

The overall goals of the ICDS scheme are:

- to provide a comprehensive range of basic services to children in an integrated manner;
- to create a mechanism at the village level through which the services could be delivered;
- to give priority to India's low-income groups, including the underprivileged tribes and Scheduled Castes.

Specific beneficiaries include: expectant and nursing mothers, other women aged 15-45 years, and children 0-6 years segregated for service purposes into three age categories (0-1, 1-3,3-6). The objectives of the ICDS programme are :

1. to improve the nutritional and health status of children in the age group 0 - 6;
2. to lay the foundations for the psychological, physical, and social development of the child;
3. to reduce the incidence of mortality, morbidity, malnutrition and school drop-outs;
4. to achieve effective coordination of policy and implementation among the various agencies and departments involved in child development; and
5. to enhance the capability of mothers to look after the health and nutritional needs of the child.

The package of six services provided are:

1. Supplementary nutrition
2. Immunisation
3. Health check-up
4. Referral services
5. Non-formal pre-school education and
6. Nutrition and health education for women.

In selecting project areas, priority is given to the following factors:

1. areas predominantly inhabited by tribes
2. backward areas

3. drought-prone and nutritionally deficient areas
4. areas predominantly inhabited by Scheduled Castes
5. areas poorly served by social services, and
6. urban slums.

Identification of Programme Staff

On the average, there is one Anganwadi worker per 1,000 population in urban and rural areas, and one per 700 population in tribal, hilly, and sparsely populated areas.

The Anganwadi workers are selected by the project communities according to three criteria:

- a member of the community where she will work, and acceptable to the local people
- 19-45 years age range and
- preferably a matriculate for rural projects, and compulsorily for urban projects.

One Child Development Project Officer is appointed to supervise the ICDS programme at the field level in each block. The Child Development Project Officer is assisted by a team of Mukhya Sevikas (Supervisors) who are appointed at a ratio of 1:20 Anganwadi workers (rural projects),1:25 Anganwadi workers (urban projects), and 1:17 Anganwadi workers (tribal projects).

Appendix 2

THE URMUL PARIVAR

URMUL is the Uttari Rajasthan Milk Union Limited, a dairy cooperative on the lines of AMUL in Gujarat. It was set up in 1972 with the limited objective of improving access to markets and increasing remuneration to milk producers in the western districts of Rajasthan. Gradually, as the network grew in scale, other functions were added on - cattle-feed manufacture and distribution, veterinary care, cooperative education, etc. In 1984, motivated by the example of the Tribhuvandas Foundation in Anand (which is the human development autonomous agency affiliated to and funded by AMUL), the owners of the dairy co-operative in Bikaner decided to start a similar venture, investing about Rs. 24 lakh of their profits into the core fund for the new institution which they decided to call the **Urmul Trust**. (The full form is the Urmul Rural Health Research and Development Trust.)

In 1988, the first unit was formed, a group of dedicated workers who wanted to work in a more underserved area than Lunkaransar, where URMUL then had its base. That group set up a branch in Bajju, a remote corner of the district. On the border with Pakistan, Bajju is in Stage II of the Indira Gandhi Canal command area, and is one of the harshest environments known to man. There, mostly using government funds and working with government programmes such as ICDS, Shiksha Karmi, etc., they expanded and, in 1994, registered **Urmul Seemant** as a separate organization.

Urmul Setu, in Lunkaransar, organized grazing lands into collectives in which, for the first time, poor people had an equal say in 'common' properties. A fodder banking scheme, cutting and storing grass from the virgin *sevan* grasslands of Jaisalmer, and transporting it to Bikaner in times of crisis, has been started. This intervention has the potential to employ thousands of people in a sustainable manner in the desert areas.

The **Arid Zone Environmental Research Centre** (AZERC) is a research and documentation facility to collect and disseminate information in a usable fashion to NGOs, communities and researchers concerned with the problems of the people in the deserts. The idea is to understand traditional survival skills - for instance, how traditional rain water harvesting systems were designed and built, how water was used, and how common properties were governed.

An action-research programme has been launched in Chattergadh, which is home to a number of itinerant pastoral communities, to study and understand the way in which they have changed their relationship to land and environment in general.

In the Bajju area, where sandstorms disrupt irrigation, and it is only possible to take a winter crop, tail-end farmers (usually the poorest) have been organized into collectives and given technical advice on covering of the water courses.

In the districts of Churu and Nagaur (from where the concentrations of migrant labour come), a team of five workers is working on legal education, literacy and numeracy and credit through self-help groups. This group now proposes to register as a separate cooperative called **Khejdi.**

Urmul Jyoti in Nokha is involved in the design and management of community drinking water programmes.

The **Vasundhara Gramothan Samiti** is owned by artisans from Lunkaransar, and has a major emphasis on promoting women's micro- enterprises.

Ujjala Chhadi joined Urmul to increase the coverage of the women's newspaper (for neo-literates) that they produce out of Jaipur.

Mukti Dhara Sansthan was set up in a village near Alwar to rehabilitate (both economically and politically) the large numbers of itinerant communities who had to migrate in search of work all the year round.

One organization in Tonk district is working on a programme to liberate hundreds of children employed on looms in the carpet industry, and another, in Nagaur district, with children of families that were traditional itinerant musicians.

Abhay Anushthan is a small leather workers' co-operative near Sikar.

All the URMUL initiatives come together once every two months to chalk out plans.

Appendix 3

EVALUATION CRITERIA FOR ANGANWADIS

Category A

- The presence of women's groups, monthly meetings, and regular support to the centre
- Presence of at least 70% of eligible village children
- Regular meetings of the committee, at least once a month
- Financial support to the anganwadi from the village community
- Cleanliness of centre and children
- New activities designed by the AW worker herself that month
- Organisation of children's group, and support provided by it to the centre
- Condition of the children; performance of 70% of the songs, games and activities
- Programmes by the children for the village community on religious festivals and national festivals
- At least 70% coverage of the six points in the AW programme – immunisation, pre-school education, etc.

Category B

- Women's group meets regularly
- 50% eligible children attend, on an average
- Committee meets once a month
- Not sufficient financial support
- Inadequate attention to cleanliness of the centre
- Lack of individual initiative in the centre's activities
- Children's group formed
- 50% knowledge of games, songs and activities
- Few programmes by children on community occasions
- At least 50% offtake of national programmes

Category C

All the AW centres that do not meet the criteria in categories A and B.

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The SURAKSHA series documents innovative programmes of Early Childhood Care and Education in India, especially those which address the intersecting needs of women, young children and girls. Carefully researched and written by scholars in the field, each study looks in depth at one programme, highlighting its achievements, philosophy and goals. The series as a whole represents the rich diversity of experience within the country, with a range in terms of geography, auspices and organisational pattern. Scholars and students of Child Development and child welfare would find the series an invaluable source of information, as well as policy makers, voluntary agencies and others concerned with programming for women's and children's development.

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SURAKSHA
Early Childhood Care and Education in India

CHILDREN OF THE UNION

Creches for Women Tobacco Workers' Children

Harshida Pandit

SEWA, Ahmedabad

263

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The SURAKSHA Series

HOME AWAY FROM HOME Family Day Care in Bombay	*Vrinda Datta*
IN SIGHT - ON SITE Day Care for Construction Workers' Children *Mobile Creches, Delhi*	*Margaret Khalakdina*
LITTLE SCHOOL ON THE HILL Child Education in Community Development *Society for Integrated Development of the Himalayas* *Mussoorie*	*Vasudha Joshi*
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SURAKSHA

Early Childhood Care and Education in India
Volume 5

CHILDREN OF THE UNION

Creches for Women Tobacco Workers' Children

by

Harshida Pandit

Monograph Series No. 5
M.S. Swaminathan Research Foundation
Madras

265

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- the reviewers, who have been a tremendous source of strength in maintaining quality but have of necessity to remain anonymous

and

- the many others, all of whom it is not possible to list, for their constant support which made this series possible.

FOREWORD

Every human being ultimately is the product of interaction between the genotype (inherent genetic make up) and the environment. While heredity determines potential, the home, health and educational environment determine whether young children bloom or remain "blossoms in the dust". There is a well-known saying - *as the twig is bent, so the branch will grow.* It is in this context that Early Childhood Care and Education assume critical significance with reference to giving the child an enabling environment for the full expression of his/her innate potential for physical and mental development.

I am happy that through the SURAKSHA series of publications, a careful chronicling of the many excellent examples of Early Childhood Care and Education in India is being undertaken. This series will enable scholars and researchers as well as policy makers and practitioners to learn from the rich diversity of experience available within our country in this field. Such an understanding is fundamental to learning from successes and thereby helping to replicate effective and economically viable models of day care.

This series has been lovingly put together and is the result of close cooperation among the many people who have worked hard on it. On behalf of the Foundation, I must particularly thank the members of the Advisory Committee, who have given unsparingly of their time and effort, the distinguished scholars who have written the case studies, the agencies whose work has been documented and the Aga Khan Foundation (India) for their support.

M.S. Swaminathan

M.S. Swaminathan

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EDITOR'S NOTE

The SURAKSHA series has grown from an idea which has been germinating for a long time. Scholars have long felt the need for documentation of Early Childhood Education Care and Education programmes in India. While there has been a wealth of experience in the country, with many small-scale experiments under the leadership of outstanding thinkers and educational leaders, it has been realised that hardly any of it has been recorded for a wider public.

The vast diversity in the situations of women and children in the country implies that child care services, especially day care, would vary widely in response to local and specific needs. At the same time, programmes for young children, by their very nature must be highly personalised, direct, small in scale, and rooted in local culture and relationships. Diversity and responsiveness to needs are hence an essential characteristic of successful programmes for young children. In the last two decades, with the rapid expansion of child care programmes like the Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) in the State sector, it has become all the more important to draw the attention of policy makers to the importance of the flexibility and responsiveness represented by these multiple approaches. Documentation has thus emerged as an essential tool for advocacy.

It was with the twin objectives of dissemination and advocacy that Project ACCESS embarked in 1993, with the support of the Aga Khan Foundation (India), on the project entitled **Multiple Approaches in ECCE in India**, with a view to bringing out a series of studies documenting innovative approaches to ECCE in India. Dr.T.S.Saraswati, Head, Department of Human Development and Family Studies, M.S. University of Baroda, who has for long been urging the need for such documentation, was an incomparable guide and adviser in launching the project. With the help of an Advisory Committee consisting of distinguished representatives from several disciplines, ranging from Child Development and Education to Management and Women's Studies, criteria were drawn up for

selection of programmes to be included in the series and procedures were developed for a participatory process of documentation.

The series of case-studies represents a wide range of experiences in terms of geography, auspices and structure. The locations range from the Himalayan region to the coastal South, from industrial metropolis to rural or tribal hamlets. The programmes are run by diverse institutions — voluntary agencies, trade unions, educational institutions and women's groups. The programmes include spontaneous private efforts as well as statutory obligations and government / non-government partnerships; they are employer-funded and union-sponsored, school-based or community based. The common element is a commitment to address the intersecting needs of women, young children and girls. In addition, each programme is need-based, client-oriented and responsive, a system of optimal size with a minimum life of three years, caters to lower socio-economic groups and is non-profit making in nature. The series title SURAKSHA was chosen for its rich resonance implying an all-embracing, nurturant care, visually represented in the logo; while the colour of each cover is intended to evoke the specific geographical context

The process of developing the studies has been a participatory one, involving a researcher/writer working closely with the agency concerned, and providing opportunities for sharing and mutual learning among the agencies through a network and occasional meetings. The studies are process-oriented in nature and not merely descriptive, focussing both on the unique features and the replicable aspects of each programme, finances, sustainability, the child care worker, the organisational structure and relevant linkages. The concluding part in each case dwells on implications of the programme for wider policy initiatives for young children.

This study, which tells the story of how SEWA (Self Employed Womens' Association) developed creches for its women members, documents a series of "firsts" - the first Trade Union (of women, self-employed and in the informal sector) to make the attempt in the face of the failure of employers to provide the support services mandated by law; the first to focus exclusively on children under three, the most vulnerable group; and now, the first to run as a cooperative of child care workers. The story recounts the workers' struggle for their rights, the dawn of an idea and its realisation in practice, the trials and tribulations, the problems faced and resolved, the triumphs and the challenges.

In this telling, many important issues are raised. Since child care is labour-intensive, or rather, human resource-intensive, the wage component must always be the biggest element in cost. The inevitability of the link between costs and quality of services is established - but not in the simplistic way of assuming that higher wages will necessarily lead to better quality of services. For in between, lies the question of the quality of the worker - which is linked, in a complex feedback loop, not only to wages, but also to training, motivation, self-esteem, social status and role perception.

Another important question is - how far can self-reliance go? Can, or should, a social service expect to be self-supporting? Should not basic social services for the vulnerable be underwritten by the State? What does social responsibility imply and whom does it involve? To the debate on these crucial issues, in a time of crisis, clouded by the threat of privatisation of social services, this volume has much to offer.

July 1995

Mina Swaminathan
Series Editor

CHILDREN OF THE UNION

CRECHES FOR WOMEN TOBACCO WORKERS' CHILDREN

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ABOUT THIS VOLUME

The Author

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1 BIRTH OF *SHAISHAV*

> *When our children are small, we workers face a terrible dilemma: should we stay at home with them and starve or go out to work and earn our bread, but leave our little ones uncared for? If only there were a proper creche — Oh, that would be a different story!*
>
> *- Shardaben, an agricultural labourer from Bilpad village*

A response to this anguished cry came from SEWA (Self Employed Women's Association), already well-known as an organisation of poor working women (Appendix 1).

SEWA's earliest experiences with child care were urban-based, but the need for services in rural areas was soon realised. One such rural area, where SEWA's organizing efforts were concentrated, is Kheda district, said to be one of the richest districts in the country. Blessed with a fertile soil, Kheda district's prosperity is based on cash crops, chief among them being tobacco. 80% of all the tobacco grown in India is found here. But wealth too is concentrated only in the hands of a powerful few. Ironically, SEWA found that the women workers who had contributed substantially to Kheda's prosperity were still steeped in poverty. So, when SEWA began organising the agricultural labourers, tobacco processors or *khali** workers and others into a union in 1984, several facts came to light.

Plight of working women

First, and most important, it was seen that while the women workers were putting in long hours of hard work, they did not even get minimum wages. Agricultural labourers were entitled to Rs. 15 per day by law, and tobacco processors to Rs. 30 per day, but SEWA surveys in three villages indicated that several hundred women were receiving only Rs.9-12 per day.

Second, working conditions were miserable, especially in the *khalis*, and facilities non-existent.

Third, these workers were not provided with any benefits such as maternity leave or child care. In the case of tobacco processors, a creche has to be provided in the *khali* according to the law (Appendix 2).

---

* *Khali - tobacco factory*

Hard at work

Sheltered only by trees

SEWA noticed that Government child care programmes like ICDS were conspicuously absent. There were a few balwadis run by Panchayats in some villages, but these covered only children of 3-6 years. The most vulnerable were children under 3 years, who needed these services the most, but for them there was nothing. The women workers were obliged to leave their children unattended or take them to the workplace where they inhaled tobacco dust and fell ill.

At the employer's mercy

Madhuben, a working woman, says -

I used to carry my eight-month-old son with me to the farm. I was working as a farm labourer to pluck the tobacco blossoms so that the leaves grow large. I used to tie a sari between two trees to make a hammock and put him in it. My employer had a bad temper. He did not like our carrying children to work. Once, as I was busy working, I heard my child'svoice. He was crying. I looked in that direction. I ran and saw no child in the hammock. I frantically looked for my child everywhere; after great difficulty I located him lying between the tobacco plants, crying bitterly. When I pulled him out, my employer scolded me saying: "Don't bring him along with you. If you cannot leave him at home, stay home, do not come to work." See, my life is like grains between the grinding stones.

Work on the farms is arduous and the hours are long, but tobacco processing is even more gruelling. It means loading heavy weights, beating tobacco leaves with long sticks, packing tobacco into bags and breathing large quantities of tobacco dust while working. Yet no other job is available in the district for the landless, who work for four months in the tobacco fields and the remaining eight months in the tobacco factories.

Suman, another tobacco worker said :

I used to take my child to the tobacco processing plant. When my child cried, I was not allowed to hold him so that the work did not suffer. Anything could happen to my child. The owner would threaten me with being laid off. During the recess, when I was permitted to attend to him, he looked half dead with hunger, his eyes were red and swollen. When a child learns to walk, he may get into the tobacco heap. The owner will shout - 'Don't bring him tomorrow.' Tell me, with whom can I leave my child? If I do not work, how can we survive?

The women were caught between the devil and the deep sea. If they left their children in a hammock made by slinging a sari between two trees, the children would often slip out, crawl on all fours into the fields, get trapped in the plants, and at times even suffocate.

When they carried the children to the processing plants, they inhaled a lot of tobacco dust, injuring their health. Mothers were permitted to breast-feed only during the recess. Though employers were supposed to provide creches by law, women were

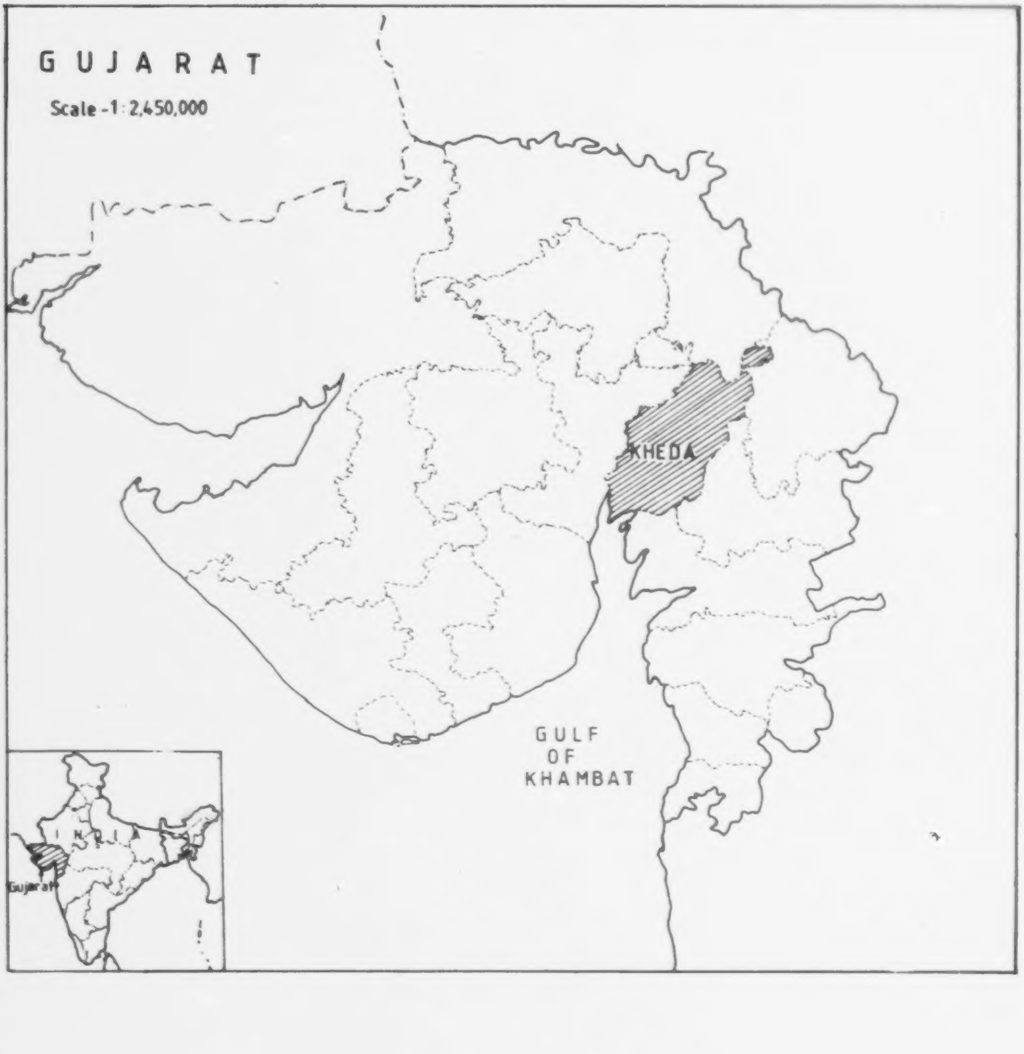
GUJARAT
Scale - 1 : 2,450,000
KHEDA
GULF OF KHAMBAT
INDIA
Gujarat

Fig.1 Kheda District, Gujarat (Inset : Gujarat State, India)

forced to neglect their young children, which grieved them.

Some women left children either wholly unattended and worried about them all the time, or with older siblings, an alternative with still worse results, since it affected the older sibling's attendance at school adversely. The women were torn with stress and anxiety about the well-being of their children and the struggle to make ends meet.

The struggle

Understanding their difficult working conditions and the complete absence of child care in the area, SEWA began to help workers to explore options. As it was considered a "prosperous" district, ICDS was absent in Kheda District till 1993. A few balwadis were being run by local trusts or panchayats, but women said their numbers, hours of operation and quality of care were woefully inadequate.

The first thing SEWA tried to do was to speak to the tobacco factory owners about setting up creches in the factory premises. The owners said they were willing to contribute towards creches, but could not possibly run them as they had no expertise in this field. Running creches within the factory was also ruled out.

Perhaps they feared our union would then get a good foothold in the factory - Indiraben, Chief Organiser of the tobacco workers.

It became increasingly clear that SEWA would have to set up creches on its own with the support of the women, the panchayat, local leaders and tobacco factory owners. At the same time, SEWA resolved to continue its struggle to ensure that the women workers obtained child care as part of their rights, with both employer and State contributions.

The hard work and dedication resulted in the birth of *Shaishav* (the word means childhood in Gujarati) in October 1989. SEWA's first creche was in Chikhodra village, where unionizing and the first successful struggle for minimum wages had begun. Later, creches were set up in 19 villages. The creche programme, initially supported by the Aga Khan Foundation, had the following objectives:

- To provide comprehensive child care services for children aged 0-3 years,
- To enable women to leave their children cared for so that they could work peacefully, and
- To support women workers in their struggle for full employment and justice in their place of work.

Today, *Shaishav* is a registered cooperative of child care workers in Kheda district, running 20 creche-cum-anganwadis in twenty villages (Appendix 3).

Further, SEWA's surveys exploded the myth of the 'prosperity' of Kheda district. Though one of the richest, it had the highest infant mortality rate in Gujarat State. According to the State Government's Bureau of Statistics the IMR was 130 per 1000 live births. But a survey of 469 women in three villages revealed that one child out of every three live births died.

SEWA's entry into this district was not easy by any means. At first, the women workers were even afraid to talk to the organisers. In 1984, SEWA helped workers file a case of non-payment of minimum wages and illegal dismissal of women workers in Chikhodra village and after three years of considerable hardship, the women won the case and were reinstated with increased minimum wages. This was a breakthrough because women learned the value of organizing and collective bargaining. Humble tobacco workers like Lalita Vasava grew into leaders as a result of this experience. Meanwhile, the growers and owners also formed an association, and started a direct dialogue with SEWA.

From tobacco worker to nursery supervisor

Lalita Vasawa completed her school leaving exams and was soon married. Along with marriage came the back-breaking work in the *khalis*. She used to earn Rs. 10 per day. When she joined the SEWA union, the daily wage increased to Rs.18. She felt both pleased and relieved when her wages increased. She started participating regularly in union meetings. Meanwhile, the *khali* owners divided up their businesses, which resulted in the closure of the factory. Lalita began to work as a SEWA organiser. She helped her co-workers to obtain whatever benefits they could get after the *khali* closed. She participated in negotiations with the owners for this purpose. In retaliation, the owners destroyed the hut where she and her family lived. She had to seek police protection for her personal safety. But she persisted in her efforts, along with other union organisers, to obtain all the benefits for the dismissed workers. Finally, they succeeded in this. Today, Lalita's say in her family has increased considerably. She no longer has to follow the practice of purdah or veiling. She is now a member of her village's legal committee. She also encourages village women to raise plant nurseries as an alternative source of employment to the *khalis*. She currently supervises nurseries in six villages of Anand Taluka in Kheda district.

2 THE *SHAISHAV* CRECHES

A *Shaishav* creche takes only young children (0-3 years) though this has changed recently. The mothers, mostly members of SEWA, leave their children at the centre on their way to work early in the morning, and collect them late in the evening, paying a fee of Rs. 10 per month. Each creche has about 15 children on an average and is run by two creche workers, who are local women belonging to the same group as the mothers. Four supervisors guide and support the creche workers and a SEWA coordinator is in overall charge of the programme.

Meeting basic needs

The creches are mostly housed in airy, clean and cheerful surroundings. Most are spacious in relation to the size of the group, though a few are cramped. The area is kept very clean, in spite of the serious water problem in several places, and well decorated, with brightly coloured objects. Water supply is adequate and in a few, separate toilets have been provided. In spite of the constant challenge of finding suitable accommodation in the village, and of having had to move several times, in most places the creche has a homely environment. Basic equipment for taking care of the children and some play materials are available and are well-maintained. The creches are housed in Panchayat ghars, rented premises in homes, and in a few cases, specially built premises.

The relationship between the creche teachers and the children is one of great warmth and affection, expressed in the happy faces and relaxed behaviour of the children and the individual knowledge of each child shown by the teacher. The children often cling to the creche teacher and sometimes are even unwilling to go home.

The daily programme is based on the child's biological rhythm, alternating sleep, feeding, play and rest. Milk is given twice a day, lunch and a snack in the afternoon, supplemented by breast milk in most cases. Health workers visit each creche once a week, screen the children for complaints and ailments, suggest treatment and supply the medicine. Immunisation and weight taking are done regularly, and weights carefully recorded.

> The daily programme is based on the child's biological rhythm, alternating sleep, feeding, play and rest.

A day at *Shaishav*

Manjula and Sharda, the creche teachers, arrive at the creche in Rasnol village. It is 7.30 a.m. The two women quickly sweep and clean the centre, for in a few minutes women on their way to work will stop at the centre with their children. Sharda then sets off to fetch the children whose mothers don't have the time to bring them to the centre.

The rest of the children arrive with their mothers. Most of them have not had a proper wash or bath. Their mothers have to finish their household chores and see to the other children too, before hurrying to the tobacco factories. So there is little time to wash and clean the little ones. They are hungry too. A quick breast feeding or a little tea and last night's *roti* are not very filling. Sharda returns with a few toddlers and a baby in her arms. It is still cold and the baby is crying.

After the mothers leave, the children are washed and bathed by the two women. The mothers have left a fresh set of clothes and the little ones are ready to face the new day. It is now 9 o'clock and all the children are ready for their milk. The infants then doze off in their cradles or *ghodias* and the toddlers play with some toys. Sharda keeps an eye on the infants and plays with the older children.

Meanwhile, Manjula begins to prepare the morning meal of *khichdi*. This rice and *moong dal* preparation also has green leafy vegetables added to it, and is made soft so it is easily digestible. She adds a little milk to a portion of the *khichdi* for the younger

Time to eat

Playtime

children. At 11 a.m., the *khichdi* is ready for children of 6 months and above. They eat the meal with relish, as they are very hungry. After finishing one bowl, they ask Manjula for more. Some even have three helpings. Sharda has just stopped one hungry little girl from eating her neighbour's share after finishing her own.

After the meal, the two women clean the children and give medicines to those who need them. The doctor of the SEWA Health Team came yesterday for the weekly check-up and prescribed the needed medicine. Most of the children had respiratory infections common in the winter season; one had bloody stools. Some children help with the toilet and wash.

Between noon and 1 p.m., it is play time again and while one of the creche workers watches them, the other cleans up dirty dishes and soiled clothes. At 1 p.m., the mothers come to the creche as they have a two-hour recess at the tobacco factory and fetch their children on the way home.

The women, covered from head to foot with tobacco dust, and dishevelled, are tired. Manjula and Sharda can barely recognize them. As they take their children home, Manjula reminds them to take a wash before breast-feeding. They nod as they leave.

Manjula and Sharda then quickly close the centre and hurry home themselves. Like the mothers, they too have children at home and must cook a meal before returning to the centre at 2.30 p.m. Manjula takes three toddlers home. Their mothers have no time to fetch and drop them off later, as they live a little farther away from the centre than the others. These three children will have a meal with Manjula's family.

After lunch, the mothers bring their children back to the centre. Manjula and Sharda are already there. The mothers sit and chat for a few minutes or play with their little ones. Madhu and Kamlaben ask Sharda when Indira, the SEWA union organisor, will be visiting their village next. Sharda checks her diary. Indira will be coming in 2 or 3 days, she assures them. It is almost 3 o'clock and the mothers, barely looking rested, despite their two-hour recess, hurry back to work.

After the mothers leave, the two creche teachers clean the children again. Most of them are covered with tobacco dust. Manjula and Sharda know about tobacco work, as they themselves were workers in the tobacco factory till recently. They know how it feels to greet one's children during the lunch break, covered with dust. And yet tobacco and agricultural work are the only employment available. Kheda is supposed to be Gujarat's richest district but the workers never see the fruits of their labour. Their's is a life full of toil and struggle.

The two women dust out the children's clothes as best as they can. There is no question of changing their clothes as they have no spare set. It is 3.30 p.m. and time for sprouted *moong dal* for the older children. The women had soaked the *dal* overnight, then boiled and lightly salted the sprouts. Each child gets a bowlful. The infants, meanwhile, drink some milk. After this snack it is rest or play again.

At 5.30, all the children have a glass of milk. Some thrust their little glasses forward for some more. Manjula and Sharda are amazed at how hungry the little ones are! Then the children are washed and their hair is neatly combed.

They play or doze some more till the first stream of mothers arrive at 6.00 p.m. By 7 p.m. the last children go home and the two creche teachers quickly tidy up. It has been a long day and they too have to hurry home to cook, clean, wash and prepare for the next day. They fold the thick cotton mat or *durrie*. It will have to be washed on Sunday at the irrigation canal. After a final sweep, the two women leave the centre, huddled up against the chill of a winter evening.

Kheda is supposed to be Gujarat's richest district
but the workers never see the fruits of their labour.
Their's is a life full of toil and struggle.

3 THE CRECHE TEACHERS

The creche teachers are all poor, self-employed women. They have worked in tobacco fields and factories themselves, faced the dilemma of where to leave their young children and all the economic pressures encountered by their colleagues in the villages. They are all union members.

Who they are

The selection of women to be creche teachers is done by the SEWA union leaders of a particular village. Some level of education, socio-economic status and acceptability to other SEWA members are the criteria adopted for selection. Many of the creche teachers are widowed or deserted women, and some are illiterate. With a few exceptions, most of the women selected have been the right choice, in terms of their ability to care for other children as their own, their acceptance by the working mothers and their sheer hard work.

Most of the teachers are from Rohit and other Harijan communities, or from the Christian community. The latter are two- or three-generation-old converts to Christianity and were mostly Harijans earlier. Thus the creche teachers themselves are from among the poorest and most socially disadvantaged communities of Kheda district.

It has been inspiring to observe how these simple but sincere and committed women have grown not only into able child care providers but even leaders in their own right. When Lucia, creche teacher of Khambolaj village, was elected Deputy Sarpanch, the first thing she did was to ensure that the Panchayat contributed towards the creche! In Rasnol village, Madhuben and Sumanben, the creche teachers, led the other SEWA members in the dharna at the tobacco factory. They were protesting against illegal closure of the factory without compensation to women who had spent their best working years in the tobacco factory. Madhuben was threatened by the owners and hired hoodlums and even offered hefty bribes but she stood firm and unflinching.

Training

The teachers are very committed and put in their best efforts. The training programme is suited to their needs, being practical, field-oriented and need-based. Teachers are trained by experienced workers and supervisors, in practical situations and without a burdensome theoretical component. Each new creche is launched with the help of an experienced teacher who can set up the daily routine, while new recruits are given a period of observation in a running creche to learn the basics hands-on. Thus, after the initial struggle to set up a viable programme in the first few creches, the lessons have been passed on by the sound methods of demonstration and learning-by-doing.

All health training is provided by health organizers of SEWA's health team, who have 10 years of experience of both primary health care and village-level training. This training focuses on community health and preventive measures rather than on growth monitoring or child development.

Training in Child Development

Till 1992 there was no training related to Child Development. SEWA tried to obtain the support of Child Development experts and academic institutes like Home Science colleges nearby. However, efforts to provide Child Development training to creche teachers and supervisors materialized only in January 1993, with an orientation conducted by Mobile Creches, Delhi. This was an eye-opening experience for the teachers and certainly increased their interest in this field.

Work culture

The day-to-day running of the creche is the joint responsibility of the two creche teachers, which is a unique experiment in creating a non-hierarchical style of management. The usual practice in India is to have one person, usually called a "teacher," in charge of the creche and record keeping, public relations, and activities of an "educational" nature, and a lower paid, less educated person, often known as "helper" or *ayah* who usually finds herself doing most

Loving and caring

Happy times are here again

of the low-status, demanding physical work. Yet here, this experiment in partnership with two workers at the same level, seems to be working out well.

The two teachers cooperate and share their duties amicably, even substituting for each other and taking turns to go home. However, one problem seems to be that of finding substitutes when either of the teachers has to take leave for any reason. Sometimes, one of the mothers substitutes for the teachers.

An all-rounder

The emerging child care worker is a multi-purpose worker. Besides looking after the children in the creche, she maintains the place, cooks, cleans and plays with the children. Since she belongs to the same community or area she is serving, the mothers identify with her. She in turn interacts with the mothers when they come to leave or breastfeed the children. She also disseminates information which she has received in health care training programmes and mothers become aware of immunization, and precautionary as well as preventive health measures. She plays the role of a paramedical worker, and is looked upon as a leader in her village. While the child care workers do not earn very much, their membership of SEWA has instilled a spirit of service in them and the satisfaction which she is able to derive from her work keeps her going.

Supervisors

Each supervisor handles six to seven creches, instead of five as originally planned, and is able to visit each centre at least once a week, oftener if needed. The work includes continuous monitoring of the creches, organising monthly meetings with the teachers and mothers, arranging for supplies and surveying the villages to explore the possibility of opening new creches.

Battered woman becomes creche teacher

Sumanben was married when she was 16 years old to a factory worker. Her married life was very happy for the first two years and she had two daughters. Under the influence of bad friends, her husband became an alcoholic. He often returned home late at night drunk and beat his wife.

Sumanben barely survived and bought her daily provisions on credit as her husband did not give her any money. Becoming frustrated, she went to her parents' place in Kunjrav. Her brother's wife had passed away, leaving two daughters. So, leaving her children with her mother, she went to work in the fields and the *khali*. When *Shaishav* started a creche in Kunjrav, she applied for the post of a creche worker as she liked to work with children. She started earning, began to educate her two daughters and organized a savings fund.

Hearing about her achievements, her husband came to meet her. He promised Sumanben that henceforth he would not harass her but treat her with respect. She refused to return with him; instead her husband moved to Kunjrav and now both of them live in Kunjrav in a rented house. He works regularly, one of the daughters has become a nun and Sumanben lives happily with the other daughter and her husband. Sumanben feels that SEWA and her creche work provided her with courage to face the various challenges of her life.

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4 MULTIPLE IMPACT

Five years after its inception, *Shaishav* has enough experience to answer the questions : What has been its impact? What has been its influence on children and mothers, on employers, and on laws and policies for child care?

Table 1 **Occupation and average monthly income of parents**

Shaishav				
Occupation	No. of mothers in employment	Mother's avg. income (per month)	No. of fathers in employment	Father's avg. income (per month)
Labourer on farm	19 (76%)	313	14 (58%)	378
Tobacco planting	2 (8%)	520	3 (13%)	587
Labourer in grain shop	4 (16%)	63	7 (29%)	400
Unemployed	0 (0%)	-	0 (0%)	-
	25 (100%)	289	24 *(100%)	410
Non-*Shaishav*				
	No. of mothers in employment	Mother's avg. income (per month)	No. of fathers in employment	Father's avg. income (per month)
Labourer on farm	17 (68%)	180	12 (48%)	295
Tobacco planting	2 (8%)	210	3 (12%)	364
Labourer in grain shop	2 (8%)	475	9 (36%)	600
Unemployed	4 (16%)	-	1 (4%)	-
	25 (100%)	177	25 (100%)	405

* *Due to the decease of one father*

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Realising that such questions would be asked, SEWA has already conducted two studies (in 1992 and 1994) on small groups, comparing children under the care of *Shaishav* and their mothers with women and children not using the creches. In the first study, about 50 children and mothers in each group were compared and in the second one, 25 in each group were interviewed. Besides this, much information is available from other sources such as records, observation, informal meetings with mothers, group discussions and comments of teachers, visitors and supervisors.

Most of the parents in both groups, both men and women, are people with little education, at a low level of subsistence, working as farm labourers or in the tobacco processing plants. It was difficult to estimate their income, as they are employed for only some days in a month, with seasonal variations. Table 1 presents a picture of the parents' work and income in 1994.

The mothers

The main reason cited by mothers for sending their children to the *Shaishav* creche is their need to earn more for the survival of the family. The second reason is the feeling that their children obtain better nutrition in the creche than at home. Finally, some mothers said that they had no one to look after their child at home. Several mothers mentioned that a combination of these factors made them send their children to *Shaishav*. Table 2 gives the mothers' reasons for putting their children in *Shaishav*.

The mothers who send their children to *Shaishav* and those who do not, were asked about arrangements for looking after their children. The different options are given in Table 3.

With regard to child care before the creches began, most *Shaishav* mothers said that they used to carry the children with them to work. Some had left them with their mothers-in-law and others had no option but to leave them alone. There were multiple responses to this as the mothers had used more than one option from time to time. The earlier study showed a similar pattern, except that nearly 25% of the mothers then left the children with older children, as opposed to 10% now.

In the case of the non-*Shaishav* mothers, the overwhelming majority, ie.,

Table 2 **Reason for putting child in *Shaishav***

Reasons	No. of women*
To increase income	22
For better nutrition and health	15
Nobody to look after the child at home	2

** n = 25, multiple answers*

Table 3 **Child care before *Shaishav***

Children taken care of by	*Shaishav* mothers *	Non-*Shaishav* mothers
Mother-in-law	4	-
Neighbours	2	-
Used to carry with them	18	22
Stayed alone	3	2
Elder children	2	-
Balwadi	-	1

n = 25, multiple answers

88% said that they themselves had to stay at home to care for the child. Only one mother said that her three-year-old was going to the Panchayat Balwadi.

The most significant contribution by *Shaishav* is that in taking care of the children of poor women, it gives them an opportunity to take up a job and augment the family income. From the study conducted by SEWA, it is obvious that the mothers have made good use of the child care facility and have improved their financial position as seen in Table 4. Twenty-five *Shaishav* mothers and twenty-five non-*Shaishav* mothers were included in the study.

Table 4 **Income before and after child's admission in *Shaishav***

	Income before *Shaishav*		Income after *Shaishav*		Non-*Shaishav*	
Occupation	No. of women	Av. income (per month)	No. of women	Av. income (per month)	No. of women	Av. income (per month)
Labourer on farm	9 (36%)	194	19 (76%)	313	17 (68%)	180
Tobacco planting	1 (4%)	300	2 (8%)	520	2 (8%)	210
Labourer (misc)	4 (16%)	52	4 (16%)	63	2 (8%)	475
Unemployed	11 (44%)	-	0	-	4 (16%)	-
	25 (100%)	67	25 (100%)	289	25 (100%)	177

There has been a sharp increase in women's income after sending their children to the creche, on an average, 4 times what they were getting before the creches were opened, while non- *Shaishav* mothers, though initially twice as well off, continued to stay at the same level. Many mothers also spoke with deep feeling about the difference it made to their "peace of mind," the quality of life having improved with less mental stress and anxiety with regard to the safety of their children.

Just as important is their increased ability to deal with their children's major and minor illnesses (diarrhoea, measles, fever) and in their growing knowledge about nutrition, immunisation and health after they began to use the *Shaishav* creches. (Appendix 4)

The children

From the clean, lively, healthy appearance of the children in the creches, it is clear that there has been a great impact on them in terms of health, growth and nutrition, though no evaluative study of the children has been done yet. The mothers too reported their general satisfaction with the children's health and growth. They have noticed that the children, in their first year, are able to achieve developmental milestones and children in the age group of 1-2 years are able to drink milk or water from a glass, understand simple instructions, play with other children and eat with a spoon, while children of 2-3 years of age are toilet-trained, eat by themselves and speak and express themselves clearly, especially if something unusual has happened. They are given toys to play with, which their parents might not be able to afford.

Interestingly, mothers also spoke about some of the discomforts in the creches. They mentioned lack of electricity, ceiling fans and toilet facility. Several wished that *Shaishav* had its own place to house the creches. The twenty-five mothers who were interviewed were very articulate in listing the many benefits that they wanted *Shaishav* to include in its services. These are listed in Table 5.

Rising aspirations

When women organise themselves and their strength increases, their hopes and expectations for themselves and their children also rise. Some women from the non-*Shaishav* group want SEWA to open creches near the places where they are working. The *Shaishav* mothers in turn hope that SEWA will also start anganwadis so that their children aged 3 + can attend them. The trust they have in *Shaishav* and the differences they see in their children are the basis for this hope.

Many mothers want SEWA to help them become literate, while some hope that their children will be provided with clothes, over and above health care, creches, anganwadis, food and training.

Table 5 **Expectations from SEWA**

Expectations	No. of women wanting benefit	
	Shaishav *	Non-*Shaishav*
Creches nearby	0	16
Light / fan	8	0
Toilet / bathroom	4	0
Training for mothers	1	0
Anganwadi	9	15
Increased income	2	1
Elder child's education	5	1
Literacy	1	1
Cleanliness	1	0
Water	1	0
Clothes	2	0
Loan	1	0
Health centre	0	3
Other benefits	0	1
No answers	1	1
No expectation	2	0

** n = 25, multiple answers were given by many women.*

The benefits that *Shaishav* has brought have made the women aware of much more that could be done and they are beginning to look forward to better services, including the attainment of their rights as labourers.

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5 GROWING PAINS

Shaishav may be compared to a banyan tree that has put down many roots and taken many people into its shelter. But before it could achieve this, it had to weather many storms. When the first creches were set up, SEWA drew up a project proposal and obtained funding from a donor agency. The Project Coordinator, along with local union leaders and members, began to explore the possibilities of local support and accommodation in each village and set about opening creches, one by one. Local women were appointed as creche teachers and given orientation by the more experienced women. Supervisors also were appointed one by one, as the need arose. The organisational pattern as seen in 1993 for 19 creches with 38 teachers is shown in Figure 2. With the District Director at the head of the pyramid, ably assisted by the project coordinator, the administration was streamlined. The day-to-day activities in each creche are managed by the supervisors and creche teachers.

Trials and tribulations

Shaishav has had its own share of ups and downs. One of the key issues has been the village *Sarpanch*'s support. Wherever support was forthcoming, the creche and its future were secure. Many

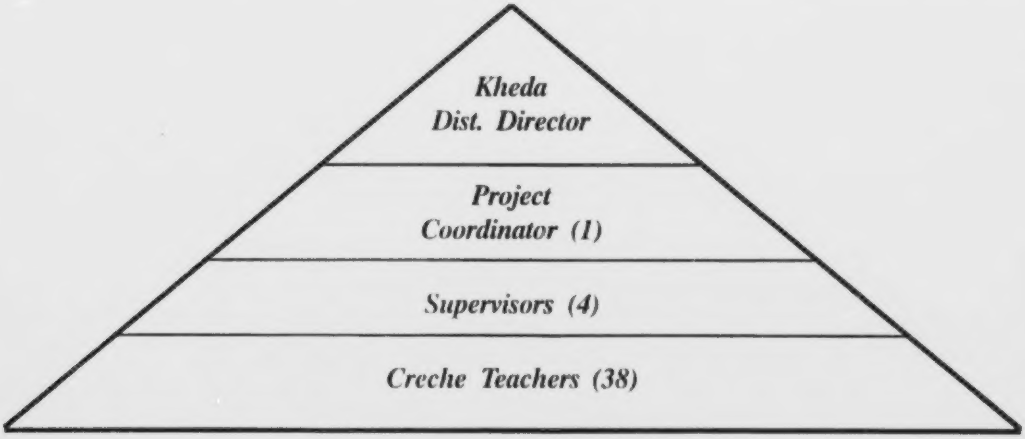

Fig. 2 Organisation of Shaishav, *1993*

Supported by the authorities

of the *Sarpanches* took a personal interest in the village creche, providing appropriate space and ensuring that creche teachers obtained full support from the rest of the village. But there were many *Sarpanches* who would not let a creche take root in their villages, as in the case of Sarsa, Verakhali and some others. But eventually persistence won support, albeit grudgingly.

In some villages, with elections and a change of *Sarpanch*, the fate of the creches also changed, sometimes for the better and at other times for the worse. In Rahatlav village, the new *Sarpanch* was annoyed that the bulk of SEWA's membership in that village had not supported his candidacy. He immediately ordered that the creche be vacated from the Panchayat's room and made no effort to obtain a suitable replacement. Though the mothers made any number of representations to him, he remained uncooperative. The women vowed to vote him out of office in the next elections.

In Rasnol, the seat of a major union action involving the politically powerful factory owner, retribution was swift. After the union's successful struggle for compensation from him, the owner put pressure on the *Sarpanch* to evict the creche from the space provided by the Panchayat. The creche was forced to move to a cramped room from the original ideal place, while the first room lay vacant with a padlock on the door.

There was maximum opposition from the *Sarpanch* where he himself was a factory owner. Such people were against the union from the beginning, because of various minimum wage struggles, and hence did not see why they should support a creche run by the union.

Another problem that *Shaishav* faced was that a few of the creche teachers were not genuinely committed to their work, and resisted the hard work involved. As a result, the quality of their work and the time they put in were inadequate and this was immediately noticed by the mothers. At Sarsa, *Shaishav* was obliged to change the creche teachers and train new ones, and at Verakhali the creche had to be closed down until matters could be sorted out with the teacher. Inevitably, both mothers and children suffered when a creche had to be temporarily shut down. Mothers always put tremendous pressure on SEWA to restart the creches and actively helped in the search for new teachers.

Tackling caste barriers

The sensitive issue of caste had to be tackled boldly by *Shaishav*. Most SEWA members, the mothers, belong to two communities, Christians and Harijans (Rohit and Parmar), and the creche teachers are also from these communities.

In one case, the *Sarpanch* suggested that *Shaishav* use space available in the local temple for the creche. On the morning of the inaugural function, several upper-caste village leaders threatened to halt the festivities, objecting to Harijan children entering the temple premises.

Another milestone

The *Sarpanch*, some village school teachers and the creche organisers intervened and managed to convince the irate elders of the value of the creche. The centre was then inaugurated and age-old caste barriers set aside for a while.

In another village, it was the mothers who raised caste-related objections. They were upset that one of the creche teachers, a *Chamar* (cobbler community and Harijan), was cooking food for the children. Castewise, this was taboo and they insisted that this practice be stopped. The creche teachers and the supervisors firmly reiterated that both the teachers would be involved in cooking. For a few days, some of the mothers stopped bringing their children to the creche. After several meetings, home visits and the support of the *Sarpanch*, the mothers were persuaded to bring their children to the centre, and there has been no further problem in that village.

By and large, the mothers understand that the creches are for the children of poor, self-employed workers, and that caste and creed are of no consequence as far as SEWA is concerned. They unite as workers and are organised according to their occupation and not with reference to caste or religion.

Any early hesitation with regard to caste, disappears when the women see first-hand the benefits of efficient child care. Teaching the children to eat, play and grow together in an atmosphere of love, the creches also serve to break down these divisions among the elders.

Child development

The lack of child development activities till 1993 was another major drawback of *Shaishav* in the early years. In addition to health, nutrition and custodial care, the teachers involved the children in a few recreational and stimulation activities that they could think of, like songs and some games. However, they themselves had very little knowledge of children's developmental milestones, beyond their own experience as mothers, and still less about the activities needed at different ages. While SEWA recognised this gap in knowledge, it could not organise suitable training in this field till January 1993, because of the inability to link up with an agency or team that could provide the appropriate field-level training required, in the Gujarati language.

Teaching the children to eat, play and grow together in an atmosphere of love, the creches also serve to break down these divisions among the elders.

Some of the academic institutions approached by SEWA made a commitment to help, but later their own teaching and research programmes took precedence. As a result, schedules were not adhered to and the creche teachers never obtained the training. Finally, links were forged with Mobile Creches (Delhi) and the Home Science College of Sardar Patel University. Two in-depth sessions each were organised by both these organisations, which also planned rigorous follow-up activities. The Home Science College reiterated its commitment to continue both training and follow-up to ensure implementation.

The search for a local training agency which would overcome the problem of language and follow-up culminated in a partnership with Sardar Patel University, Vallabh Vidyanagar, though after some initial difficulty.

What followed and continues till today is a regular process of intensive child development training and follow-up by trainers. This vital input has contributed significantly towards enhancing the daily creche programme, and has opened new horizons in knowledge and skills for mothers and creche teachers alike.

From project to cooperative

Self-reliance being one of the goals of SEWA, the main concern was to find ways and means to sustain the creche programme in the long run. In SEWA's experience, the cooperative form of organisation lends itself best to the goal of self-reliance, since it allows women to run their own economically viable organisations, make decisions and control their own organisation. SEWA has been promoting such representative organisations of women for the last two decades.

A cooperative is ideally suited for this because it is a membership-based organisation with a democratically elected management or Executive Committee, which is empowered to take decisions. Another important feature of the cooperative is that each member is a worker-cum-owner and an equal partner. There is no boss, no one person who runs the affairs of the group. The cooperatives encourage women's collective leadership. SEWA has now promoted seventy cooperatives of different types, which in turn, have formed a State-level apex body

Another important feature of the cooperative is that each member is a worker-cum-owner and an equal partner. There is no boss, no one person who runs the affairs of the group. The cooperatives encourage women's collective leadership.

- the Gujarat State Women's Sewa Cooperative Federation (Appendix 5). It was in this context that SEWA suggested that creche teachers form their own service cooperative to run the creches.

Another challenge

Registering such an organisation in Kheda district is not an unusual or difficult process, since the cooperative movement in Gujarat, and particularly in Kheda district, is very strong, with a long history. The milk cooperatives of this district are especially famous.

However, the women soon learned that the *Shaishav* cooperative was the first of its kind in the district. The registering authorities led them through a long maze of procedures, and finally *Shaishav* was officially registered in December 1994. The women put up Rs.101 each as share capital to launch their own organisation, and from then on, all donations and contributions from parents go directly to the cooperative's fund. The pattern of organisation as it is now is given in Fig.3. As new challenges are met, *Shaishav* will evolve new structures to deal with them.

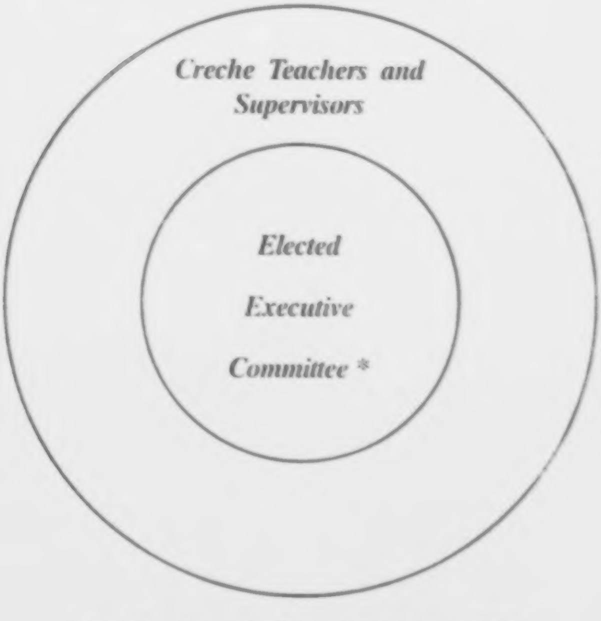
Creche Teachers and Supervisors
Elected Executive Committee *

Fig. 3 : Organisation of Shaishav *1994*

* The Executive Committee is made up of five creche teachers and one SEWA organiser.

6 THE FINANCIAL PATTERN

Costs and benefits

Just as the pattern of work and the organisational structure have evolved over a period of five years, so too have the pattern of finances. The level and pattern of expenditure on the creches have now reached a certain stability, as can be seen from Figures 4 and 5.

Approximately the same total was spent in both years on the same number of children, Rs. 7.94 lakhs in 1993 and Rs. 5.43 lakhs in 1994 (figures for 1994 are for the first nine months only). While there have been small increases in the percentage of expenditure on personnel, supplies and administration, there has been a corresponding reduction in the expenditure on training. In 1994, a new element has been introduced - expenditure on child development activities.

The cost of child care

Looking at the cost side of the picture, the present cost per child per day is Rs.9.6. This may seem high in comparison with a programme like ICDS, but such a comparison has little meaning, since the extent, nature and quality of services are quite different in the two cases. ICDS has not so far provided day-care for any age-group. At the same time, it must be accepted that the younger the child the higher the cost, because of increased vulnerability. Any programme focussing exclusively on infants below three is bound to be more expensive than one catering to 3-6 years or even 0-6 years old.

In comparison with most other creche programmes in the country funded by the Government of India's Scheme of Assistance to Voluntary Agencies for Creche for Working/Ailing Mothers, the other major differences are:

- the high teacher-child ratio of 1:7
- the high supervisor-teacher ratio of 1:5
- the payment of minimum wages/wages equivalent to that of the mothers to the creche workers.

Few other agencies can meet these exacting standards.

Cost and quality

These are precisely the reasons for the high quality of care and individualised attention given to each child, which is the very basis of healthy all-round development. But perhaps there is some scope for making savings without sacrificing programme quality, for example, by having a larger-size of unit, including children aged 3-6, since

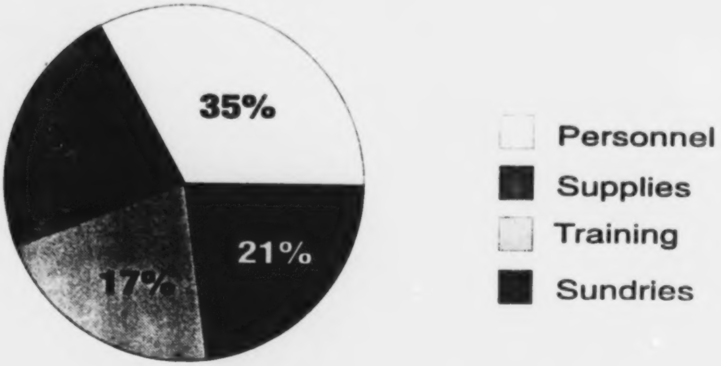

Fig.4 Expenditure on creches (1993)

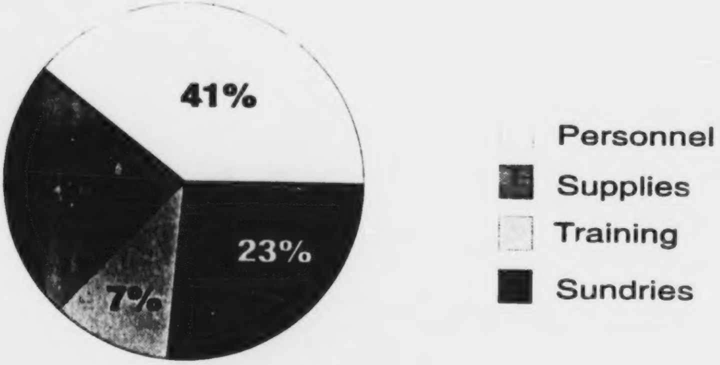

Fig.5 Expenditure on creches (Jan-Sept 1994)

Note : 258 children in 19 centres. Average number of children per creche = 14. Cost per centre per month = Rs. 3510. A month is taken to be 26 working days.

the number of teachers needed would not increase proportionately. Also, since the children continue to be breastfed, milk, which is the most expensive source of protein, could perhaps be substituted by cheaper locally-available protein-giving foods. Yet this may be no saving, if *Shaishav* continues to succeed in getting bigger donations of milk from the local milk cooperatives, as it has been doing already. But the lesson is clear: organised child care, which is more than merely custodial, does not come cheap.

Towards sustainability

Funds for the creches come from multiple sources. However, dramatic evidence of increasing self-reliance can be seen in the changing pattern of financial support. Wholly donor-funded at the beginning (1989) SEWA had, by 1993, been able to generate almost 20% of *Shaishav's* needs from other sources, as seen from Table 6.

In the first nine months of 1994, donor dependence had already dropped to 66% and this trend is likely to continue.

Table 7 gives a picture of the various sources that have contributed to this growing self-reliance. The larger contributions are from the Panchayats (for space and facilities) and from SEWA itself (for training and administrative support). But these two amounts, while increasing in absolute figures, formed only 65% of the total in 1994 as against 85% in 1993.

Other sources of income have increased from 15% to 35%. Mothers' contributions, since they are nominal in nature (about Rs.10/- per month per head) are more or less stable; milk from the milk cooperatives, free medical consultancies and donations in cash and kind from the village have gone up to some extent. But the most dramatic shift has been in employers' contributions.

Though mandated by law under the Factories Act to run creches, most factory owners find it easier and cheaper to evade the law by various well-known strategies. Some owners may make a contribution, as a gesture of philanthropy, but would not like to be pressed to fulfil all their obligations.

Table 6 **Sources of income**

	1993 (Rs.)	1994 (9 months) (Rs.)
Donor	6,46,469 (81.43%)	3,60,667 (66.38%)
Raised	1,47,413 (18.57%)	1,82,593 (33.61%)
Total	7,93,882 (100%)	5,43,260 (100%)

Table 7 **Income from sources other than donors**

	1993 (Rs.)	1994 (9 months) (Rs.)
Panchayat contribution for space	69,200 (46.95%)	52,000 (30.14%)
Mothers' contribution	17,912 (12.15%)	22,166 (12.83%)
Khali owners' Association	1,501 (1.01%)	28,627 (16.57%)
Milk cooperative's contribution	- (0%)	1,000 (0.57%)
Free medical consultancy	3,000 (2.03%)	5,600 (3.24%)
Other contributions from the village (*Nastha*)	- (0%)	3,300 (1.91%)
SEWA's contribution (Training Director's Salary + Admn.)	55,800 (37.86%)	60,000 (34.74%)
	1,47,413 (100%)	1,72,693 (100%)

The law on creches is not strictly enforced; and there are too many loopholes in it to make enforcement realistic at present. SEWA has been working for some time, and with some success, to ensure payment of Minimum Wages to the women tobacco workers, and has not so far fought for implementation of the already weak creche regulations. However, the business community, which owns the tobacco factories, traditionally places great emphasis on charity as a religious obligation, and many of the owners have set up philanthropic trusts, giving both time and money for charitable activities. Perhaps the combination of SEWA's militancy on behalf of women workers and traditional charity is the magic formula which has yielded results.

It remains to be seen how far the factory owners can be expected to go in fulfilling their obligations. But the creche programme will grow in self-reliance and sustainability, even if it can never become wholly self-supporting.

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7 SOME EMERGING ISSUES

After five years of grass-root level work in developing creches for the children of working women, several important issues have emerged, which have implications not only for *Shaishav* but for all child care programmes.

Child care and working women

From SEWA's experience, it is clear that child care has to be part of a holistic, integrated strategy for the development of the poor in our country. For such groups full employment is the foremost priority However, together with full employment and security of income, social security, including health care, child care, housing and insurance, is also a basic need of the poor. Child care must be an integral part of the overall strategy to tackle poverty in our country, as it permits women to work and improve their economic condition.

Further, child care which is provided according to the needs of the mothers, and at their very doorstep, is the most useful and has the maximum impact on the lives of poor women and their children. Rather than a centrally-controlled,. vertical programme, creche services should be developed in a way that provides for flexibility and adjustment to local need through decentralisation.

This implies that the women themselves should at least have considerable say as to the direction of the village-based creche programme, if not complete control. Local women should be the providers of creche services, while at the same time village leaders, people's organisations and the mothers themselves should contribute to the development of the creches.

Shaishav has played a crucial role in bringing these related issues into focus. It has demonstrated the need to match the timings of the creche with the working hours of the mother and the importance of the sensitive 0-3 age-group, which very few creches have the courage and the determination to tackle. In fact, till 1994 *Shaishav* was unique in catering only to children below three years, a policy which has now changed in response to pressure from the mothers. *Shaishav* has also demonstrated the possibility and the importance of decentralised services, and the vital role of the mothers in running the service.

Official support

Shaishav has depended greatly on the support of local leaders like *Sarpanches* and government functionaries like the Taluka Panchayat Presidents or District Education Officers. Some *Sarpanches*, in particular, were

Thank God there's a creche !.

No school for them

quick to understand the importance of creches for the village women, and offered useful guidance, taking responsibility for providing free space. Where no Panchayat rooms are available, the *Sarpanches* helped to obtain space in the village school or elsewhere, and saved the rent costs which would certainly have inflated the total costs.

Some Panchayats, like the one in Chikodhra village, have even gone so far as to construct a special building for the creche. Almost all have offered to provide land for construction, if SEWA undertook the building of a creche. When SEWA raised the issue of toilets for the creche, the *Sarpanches* were sympathetic, but said that they did not have the resources for this, and suggested that SEWA raise the funds required for constructing toilets. Since this requires a substantial outlay and as the creches are often asked to move from the Panchayat rooms, the toilets are yet to be constructed.

Where authorities have been tardy with their help, one reason might be that SEWA's clients are by class, caste, age and gender, at the bottom of the heap in rural society. As the needs of poor mothers are unlikely to be a priority for the village leaders who are usually male, upper-caste and affluent, getting help from them can hardly be expected at this stage.

Child care and education

Mothers also realise that creches are the first step towards the education of their children. SEWA organisers report that many girls, freed from the necessity of taking care of younger siblings, have started attending the local primary school. In villages where the creche was located in the local school premises, the mothers said they found this both appropriate and convenient as the older siblings were nearby. During the school breaks, they would come and play with their younger siblings in the creche and the teachers would also come by to see how they were doing. Linking creches with the education of rural children, especially girls, seems to be important, and the creche teachers have begun to explore this link actively with district level officials in the Education Department. Efforts are under way to provide space in the village schools for creches.

The Union and the creche

The close link between the union and the creches has had the effect of strengthening both, and leading to mutual support. The creche programme has helped the Union directly and indirectly because of its outreach to women workers. For example, it was the mothers of Rasnol who finally found the courage to speak out

SEWA organisers report that many girls, freed from the necessity of taking care of younger siblings, have started attending the local primary school.

against the injustices suffered by them at the *khali* when the then Labour Commissioner made a surprise visit. Again, when the women were out of work due to Union action and owners' retaliation, as in Rasnol village, they would continue to leave the children at the creche, while Union organisers held meetings with them and approached the owners for re-starting work in the *khali* factories. The faith of the mothers in the Union and in the importance of the creches helped through several crises.

Further, the existence of the creche programme has softened SEWA's confrontationist union image. SEWA is now viewed as the manager of useful development programmes like creches and health care. Many of the *khali* owners who refused to even speak to SEWA's union organisers, are quite amenable when it comes to discussing child care or health. These issues serve as useful channels for dialogue and negotiation, in an otherwise hostile atmosphere.

Multiple roles

There are also some piquant and unexpected aspects to this relationship. SEWA is the first ever Union in the country to provide child care services to its members. In so doing, it finds itself playing several roles at the same time, some of them with inherent contradictions and hence a potential source of identity confusion. SEWA is, at one and the same time, a militant union devoted to protecting women's interests as workers, a service organisation delivering services like child care and health for working women and functioning as an institution, and an employer, employing workers to deliver specific services like child care. Understandably, the perceptions of the different partners are not similar. When mothers identify themselves with the Union, they see themselves as "users" and not as "owners"; the creche teachers identify themselves as "employees", while SEWA organisers see all as working partners in a movement. The process of clarifying and understanding these multiple roles, resolving potential contradictions, developing appropriate attitudes and living out the roles effectively is a long, slow and complex one, which SEWA has begun to address.

Credit and health

The creche programme has also had the effect of organizing the workers on other pressing issues like credit and health. The link with the Union was there from the start, and as the creche programmes grew, the women were ready to work together and form a savings group. In every village where there was a creche, the mothers formed a savings group and even started giving out small loans from the funds collected. There are currently 45 savings groups with a total saving of Rs. 1,86,000.

Similarly, although SEWA-trained village health workers were active even before the creches started, the latter began to provide a readymade interface between the mothers and the children and the health workers. This improved and increased both the outreach of health care provided and the demand for this service. Currently, SEWA members are obtaining primary health care from twelve village health workers, including the nineteen villages where the creche programme exists. Linking the creche and health services has been essential to ensure integrated social services.

Child care and social justice

Organising workers on health and child care issues can be a focal point for further organising on economic and other issues. In Kheda district's Tranol, Kunjrav and Rasnol villages, for example, tobacco workers were reluctant to unionise and demand minimum wages. They would barely admit that many women worked night shifts for abysmal wages and were subject to sexual abuse, but they did however, express the need for health care. With regular contact through health activities, a close relationship was built between the tobacco workers and SEWA, leading to willingness to join the Union and even demand education for workers.

In response to workers' needs and in the absence of State-run schemes for the self-employed, SEWA has initiated several programmes of its own, integrating its various activities. For example, members are organised to demand child care from the local authorities, and women involved in health activities are organised to demand cheap and safe drugs or water and sanitation. It is also emphasized that rather than passively waiting for social services, they must organise and struggle, make themselves seen and heard, to obtain services. The lesson that workers have to be involved as participants, rather than passive 'recipients' of services, has been well learnt by the workers, and has to be taken into account by the policy makers.

The role of the child care worker

Shaishav has thrown up yet another vital issue - the role and status of the child care worker. By its insistence on paying the child care worker Minimum Wages (the same payable to the creche mothers as agricultural or factory labourers) SEWA has brought mothers and creche teachers together as partners and shown itself to be a good employer. Not only that, it has given the creche teachers a sense of self-worth and self respect as well as an identity as paraprofessionals and released the springs of initiative and creativity within them, making them ready to run the creches themselves. This is a far cry from the situation of most creche workers in the country, who subsist on a miserable pittance far below minimum wages, and with poor working conditions. SEWA's bold step should add force to their demand for a better deal. That the quality of services is related to the status, satisfaction and motivation of the workers may seem an obvious managerial truth, but it is one that has far-reaching consequences for policy.

Replicability

The elements which are the outstanding characteristics of *Shaishav* and which are largely responsible for the quality and relevance of the programme, are also by definition, the most difficult to replicate, besides being expensive, precisely because they are related directly to SEWA's unique work ethos, goals and style of working.

In replicating these elements, the limitations of Government funding and of agencies with different goals and styles and lacking such linkages, will have to be kept in mind, while at the same time finding ways to retain some of the positive elements.

Inputs to policy

From running a few creches, to turning the issue into an insistent demand of women workers for support services as their right is a big step and has taken SEWA into the arena of policy-making. SEWA has already well demonstrated in the past its clear understanding of the need to work at several levels, from the micro-level of grassroots to the macro-level of national and international policy making and legislation, and of the varying strategies needed at each level. SEWA's skills in the various stages of policy-making, which have so far been used to battle for women's rights as workers, are now being brought into play on the issue of child care as a support for working women.

The question of how to influence policy and of the mix of various strategies to be adopted, cannot be prescribed. But there is today a new aspect to be considered. SEWA, considering itself a non-political organisation, has so far steadfastly refused to be drawn into electoral politics. Yet many hold the view that entry into electoral politics may be necessary to give poor working women a voice in decision making and the allocation of funds. This is illustrated by a recent success story from SEWA itself. One of the creche teachers, who contested an election and become the Vice-*Sarpanch* of her village, has been able to create awareness and support for the creche in the Panchayat. In the context of the new Panchayati Raj setup, which makes special provision for women's participation, SEWA may even wish to reconsider its stand on this issue.

Yet many hold the view that entry into electoral politics may be necessary to give poor working women a voice in decision making and the allocation of funds.

8 LOOKING AHEAD

Shaishav Cooperative, formally registered in December 1994, has steadily gained ground as a district-level cooperative of women workers, thus entering a new and challenging phase of work. Yet many important questions face the cooperative, perhaps the most pressing being that of financial sustainability, in view of escalating costs of food and milk. Creche teachers will have to undertake financial planning and be fully conversant with costing and raising funds.

At the same time, the cooperative faces tremendous pressure to expand, from the district's 15,000 members in 200 villages. Having seen the fruits of child care, women workers in other villages and talukas are pressing hard for such centres in their villages. *Shaishav* has plans to start an additional twenty creches over the next three years.

Another breakthrough

The lack of facilities for children 3-6 years of age who leave the creches, has been a concern from the beginning. Mothers have been constantly arguing that their 3 to 6 years olds would lose all that they had gained. Many mothers were so vociferous on this issue that they even pulled out contributions at meetings to make the inclusion of 3-6 year olds possible.

At first, SEWA explored the possibility of a link up with ICDS, but found that this would be difficult. So began the search for resources to set up balwadis.

Shaishav has finally expanded its work in each centre and a balwadi of 3 - 6 year olds runs adjacent to each original creche. Three creche teachers now work with forty-five young children. This has no doubt fulfilled a long-standing need, but has also raised new problems. The first is that of adequate space for the additional children, but this is a challenge *Shaishav* is all too familiar with. In some places, accepting a third teacher was hard for the initial pair, who had a comfortable working arrangement. Patient and sensitive handling by the supervisors will help to overcome this.

The big change is that *Shaishav*'s visibility as a cooperative of women workers has increased at the district level. There is a lot of interest from workers, local leaders, officials and employers. So *Shaishav* begins its second phase with several difficult problems facing it on the one hand, and on the other, the grass roots experiences, tremendous faith and solid backing of SEWA members as constant inspiration.

Appendix 1

A NOTE ON SEWA

The Self-Employed Women's Association, popularly known by its acronym 'SEWA', entered its twenty-second year in 1994.

The SEWA movement is enhanced by its being a Sangam or confluence of three movements - the labour movement, the cooperative movement and the women's movement. Gandhian philosophy, with its emphasis on non-violence and truth, is the inspiration for SEWA, which helps poor, self-employed women to effect social change.

Organising women to enter the mainstream of the economy through the twin strategies of struggle and development, SEWA also supports its members' efforts towards empowerment and autonomy. SEWA assists its members in presenting their own priorities for employment and other related issues to the government and society at large, and helps women organise for policies and programmes which are just, appropriate and truly reflect the reality, needs and priorities of the self-employed. Further, SEWA helps women workers to obtain the visibility and recognition that are their due both in the economy and in society. Finally, SEWA organises self-employed workers into both tradewise unions and co-operatives, so that they may be autonomous and self-employed in the true sense of the word; and so that they may finally control the fruits of their own labour.

Self-employed workers are those who earn a living through their own small enterprise or their own labour. Most are very poor, rarely having assets or working capital. All they have are the knowledge and skills of their traditional occupation and their capacity for hard labour. There are three types of self-employed workers :

- Hawkers and vendors who sell their wares, often moving from place to place
- Home-based workers and craftswomen who produce goods, and
- Manual labourers and service-providers who sell their labour.

Today nearly 90% of all women workers in India are self-employed, and women constitute more than half of the self-employed. SEWA's two concrete goals for the self-employed are full-employment and self-reliance. Economists and planners may talk of full-employment at the macro-level, but for SEWA, the term means that every single family obtains employment, with assurance of income security, food security and social security (health care, child care and shelter). In addition, self-reliance implies that women should be autonomous individually, collectively, economically and in terms of their decision-making ability.

SEWA's three main activities, which are integrated and interlinked, with SEWA members as the focus of all three are:

- The Union
- The co-operatives
- The support services.

When organizing poor, self-employed women, it became apparent that while regular sustained work and income, and then food security are their foremost priorities, they also have other basic needs. These needs, which include health care, child care, shelter and protective insurance, may be broadly called social security services. Over the years, SEWA has found that lack of these seriously hampers the ability of poor women to earn. Child care thus has a direct economic impact on the lives of the poorest of women workers in India.

Appendix 2

FACTORIES ACT, 1948 (INDIA) as amended up to 1st May, 1982.

Sec. 48 : Creches

1. In every factory wherein more than thirty women workers are ordinarily employed, there shall be provided and maintained a suitable room or rooms for the use of children under the age of six years of such women.

2. Such rooms shall provide adequate accomodation, shall be adequately lighted and ventilated, shall be maintained in a clean and sanitary condition and shall be under the charge of women trained in the care of children and infants.

3. The State Government may make rules:

    a. prescribing the location and the standards in respect of construction, accomodation, furniture and other equipment of rooms to be provided under this section;

    b. requiring the provision in factories to which this section applies of additional facilities for the care of children belonging to women workers including suitable provision of facilities for washing and changing their clothing;

    c. requiring the provision in any factory of free milk or refreshment or both for such children;

    d. requiring that facilities shall be given in any factory for the mothers of such children to feed them at necessary intervals.

Appendix 3

THE GROWTH OF THE CRECHES

Name of village	No. of children	Date of starting creche
Rasnole	10	22-10-89
Rahatlav	10	18-12-89
Kunjrav	20	06-02-90
Chikhodra	14	16-04-90
Bharoda	13	16-06-90
Ode	15	29-09-90
Rakhial	12	26-11-90
Bilpad	18	29-12-90
Dedarda	13	14-03-90
Navli	14	20-03-91
Sarsa	10	30-03-91
Vanoti	10	23-07-91
Khambolaj	15	25-07-91
Kavitha	13	11-09-91
Vadod	12	07-12-91
Verakhali	10	12-06-92
Vehra	14	21-07-92
Ajarpura	20	01-03-92
Sinhol	15	11-06-93
Total	258	

Appendix 4

CHANGES IN MOTHERS' HEALTH-RELATED ABILITIES/SKILLS

Table 1 **Food items given to children**

Mothers (in *Shaishav*)						
Yes/No	Banana		Khichdi		Green vegetables	
	No. of women	%	No. of women	%	No. of women	%
Yes	53	96	54	98	50	91
No	1	2	-	0	1	2
Does not give because too young	-	0	-	0	1	2
Does not give because too hot	-	0	-	0	2	4
Other reasons	1	2	1	2	1	2
Total	55	100	55	100	55	100

Table 2 **Food items given to children**

Mothers (not *Shaishav*)						
Yes/No	Banana		Khichdi		Green vegetables	
	No. of women	%	No. of women	%	No. of women*	%
Yes	35	65	47	87	38	70
No	14	26	6	11	5	9
Does not give because too young	1	2	1	2	4	7
Does not give because too hot	-	0	-	0	1	2
Too heavy	4	7	-	0	1	2
Other reasons	1	2	1	2	1	2
Total	55	100	55	100	50	92

* No reply in 4 cases.

Table 3 **Measures taken in case of diarrhoea**

Measures taken	Mothers (in *Shaishav)* 55		Mothers (not *Shaishav*) 54	
	No. of women	%	No. of women*	%
Visit to doctor	-	0	18	33
Juice of sugar and salt	55	100	9	17
Banana	-	0	3	6
Medicines from workers	-	0	-	0
Grated peel of pomegranate	-	0	11	20
Nutmeg	-	0	7	13

* *No reply in 2 cases.*

Table 4 **Measures taken in case of fever**

Measures taken	Mothers (in *Shaishav)* 55		Mothers (not *Shaishav*) 54	
	No. of women*	%	No. of women*	%
Visit to Doctor	7	13	38	70
Put cloth immersed in cold water	36	65	11	20
Tablets from SEWA worker	-	0	-	0
Put cloth immersed in salty water	14	25	2	4
Baadha	1	2	7	13
Home remedies	-	0	5	9
Medicines from village shop	-	0	4	7
Other steps	-	0	7	13

* *Multiple responses.*

Table 5 **Measures taken in case of measles**

Measures taken	Mothers (in *Shaishav*) 55 No. of women*	%	Mothers (not *Shaishav*) 54 No. of women*	%
Visit to doctor	30	55	2	4
Baadha	9	16	37	69
Precautionary measures as suggested by SEWA workers	21	38	5	9
Not suffered from measles	14	25	-	0
No response	-	0	16	30

* *Multiple responses.*

Table 6 **Measures taken in case of major illness**

Measures taken	Mothers (in *Shaishav*) 55 No. of women*	%	Mothers (not *Shaishav*) 54 No. of women	%
Takes child to Govt. hospital	7	13	25	46
Takes child to private hospital	9	16	29	54
Tablets from SEWA Health centre	40	73	-	0

* *Multiple responses.*

Appendix 5

SERVICE COOPERATIVES FOR CHILD CARE

Women workers themselves are so steeped in their economic problems that it takes them a while to fully comprehend how child care can affect their lives and that of their children.

So at first, women do not always articulate child care as one of their top priorities. However, once they are organized, become aware of their rights as workers and begin to appreciate themselves and their own economic contribution to society, their perceptions and needs change. They begin to articulate their social security needs including child care and are even willing to contribute towards this from their own earnings. This then, is the first hurdle or struggle that they face - that of recognizing their own self-worth, their individual and collective contribution as economically active members of society.

The next struggle is to obtain access to social security services. Eager to find out where and how services may be obtained, women soon learn that the availability of child care is far below their needs.

Despite constitutional directive principles and the legal provisions available for the protection of children of working women, adequate child care services are not available. The National Policy for Children was followed by the Integrated Child Development Scheme (ICDS) in 1974. In the same year, the National Committee on the Status of Women in India categorically stated that adequate child care was essential for the children of working women. Moreover, in 1988, the landmark report, SHRAM SHAKTI of the National Commission for Self-Employed Women, stressed the need for child care. Following this report a network pressure group, FORCES (Forum for Creche and Child Care Services), was formed as a coalition of several groups to lobby for adequate child care both in terms of quality and quantity.

Even after two decades, ICDS and other government child care services have not been able to reach out to the geographic areas and vulnerable populations which need these services the most. As a result, many children of poor families in rural as well as in urban areas are left out.

To fill in the lacuna of available child care options, SEWA has helped its members organise their own child care programme since 1982. Self-employed women were provided in-service training and began to work as child care providers in Ahmedabad city, and some villages of Ahmedabad district, and by 1986, the child care workers formed their own cooperative, *Sanghini*.

The registration of *Sanghini* as a full-fledged cooperative was itself a long struggle. The Cooperative Department officials always asked - *But what will you produce in* Sanghini*? How will you be viable?* The first group of *Sanghini* leaders confidently replied - *We will produce child care services, of course. And if we do our work well, our colleagues will pay for the services. It will be a struggle to be viable, but in SEWA we have learned how to struggle. Why, our lives are full of struggle all the time!*

The persistence paid off, and today *Sanghini* runs 36 creches and anganwadis in slums where more than 1000 children (0 to 6 years) are looked after by local women, also members of SEWA. Training in child care, child development, health care, nutrition and organising is provided by SEWA as technical support. Equipped with this experience, SEWA began work in Kheda district in 1984.

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Early Childhood Care and Education in India
Volume 6

MOVING UP TO SCHOOL

Community Preschools for the Rural Poor

by

S.J.P. Karikalan

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FOREWORD

Every human being ultimately is the product of interaction between the genotype (inherent genetic make up) and the environment. While heredity determines potential, the home, health and educational environment determine whether young children bloom or remain "blossoms in the dust". There is a well-known saying - *as the twig is bent, so the branch will grow.* It is in this context that Early Childhood Care and Education assume critical significance with reference to giving the child an enabling environment for the full expression of his/her innate potential for physical and mental development.

I am happy that through the SURAKSHA series of publications, a careful chronicling of the many excellent examples of Early Childhood Care and Education in India is being undertaken. This series will enable scholars and researchers as well as policy makers and practitioners to learn from the rich diversity of experience available within our country in this field. Such an understanding is fundamental to learning from successes and thereby helping to replicate effective and economically viable models of day care.

This series has been lovingly put together and is the result of close cooperation among the many people who have worked hard on it. On behalf of the Foundation, I must particularly thank the members of the Advisory Committee, who have given unsparingly of their time and effort, the distinguished scholars who have written the case studies, the agencies whose work has been documented and the Aga Khan Foundation (India) for their support.

M. S. Swaminathan

M.S. Swaminathan

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EDITOR'S NOTE

The SURAKSHA series has grown from an idea which has been germinating for a long time. Scholars have long felt the need for documentation of Early Childhood Education Care and Education programmes in India. While there has been a wealth of experience in the country, with many small-scale experiments under the leadership of outstanding thinkers and educational leaders, it has been realised that hardly any of it has been recorded for a wider public.

The vast diversity in the situations of women and children in the country implies that child care services, especially day care, would vary widely in response to local and specific needs. At the same time, programmes for young children, by their very nature must be highly personalised, direct, small in scale, and rooted in local culture and relationships. Diversity and responsiveness to needs are hence an essential characteristic of successful programmes for young children. In the last two decades, with the rapid expansion of child care programmes like the Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) in the State sector, it has become all the more important to draw the attention of policy makers to the importance of the flexibility and responsiveness represented by these multiple approaches. Documentation has thus emerged as an essential tool for advocacy.

It was with the twin objectives of dissemination and advocacy that Project ACCESS embarked in 1993, with the support of the Aga Khan Foundation (India), on the project entitled **Multiple Approaches in ECCE in India**, with a view to bringing out a series of studies documenting innovative approaches to ECCE in India. Dr.T.S.Saraswati, Head, Department of Human Development and Family Studies, M.S. University of Baroda, who has for long been urging the need for such documentation, was an incomparable guide and adviser in launching the project. With the help of an Advisory Committee consisting of distinguished representatives from several disciplines, ranging from Child Development and Education to Management and Women's Studies, criteria were drawn up for

selection of programmes to be included in the series and procedures were developed for a participatory process of documentation.

The series of case-studies represents a wide range of experiences in terms of geography, auspices and structure. The locations range from the Himalayan region to the coastal South, from industrial metropolis to rural or tribal hamlets. The programmes are run by diverse institutions — voluntary agencies, trade unions, educational institutions and women's groups. The programmes include spontaneous private efforts as well as statutory obligations and government/non-government partnerships; they are employer-funded and union-sponsored, school-based or community based. The common element is a commitment to address the intersecting needs of women, young children and girls. In addition, each programme is need-based, client-oriented and responsive, a system of optimal size with a minimum life of three years, caters to lower socio-economic groups and is non-profit making in nature. The series title SURAKSHA was chosen for its rich resonance implying an all-embracing, nurturant care, visually represented in the logo; while the colour of each cover is intended to evoke the specific geographical context.

The process of developing the studies has been a participatory one, involving a researcher/writer working closely with the agency concerned, and providing opportunities for sharing and mutual learning among the agencies through a network and occasional meetings. The studies are process-oriented in nature and not merely descriptive, focussing both on the unique features and the replicable aspects of each programme, finances, sustainability, the child care worker, the organisational structure and relevant linkages. The concluding part in each case dwells on implications of the programme for wider policy initiatives for young children.

This study describes an experiment which is one aspect of a programme of total development of an oppressed and marginalised community -- the toddy tappers of the coastal areas of South India. An offshoot of a larger programme of community development through participatory action, it was a response to the felt need of the community, the articulation of an intuitive perception of illiterate parents that preschool was the first step on the road to educational success. Built up with community support, the programme also has some weaknesses arising from the community's limited perceptions -- the preschool curriculum may not be acceptable to specialists in child development, even though it meets the aspirations of the parents. Yet, it is community participation that has fuelled the extraordinary mobilisation of resources to fund the programme and the ingenuity and skill displayed in marshalling them. How then can these conflicts be reconciled? Who is the arbiter of quality, and on behalf of whom? Which criteria are relevant?

Once more, the teacher, or child care worker, comes to the forefront of this picture. For here, it is evident that the sincerity, care and commitment of the worker has played a more significant role in the overall development of the child than the nature of the curriculum or the extent of her training. And this commitment in turn grows out of her motivation, self-esteem and valued status in the community, all carefully nurtured by the organisation she works for. What does that cost? These intervening variables are hard to price in terms of the market, though cost is still related to quality. Both academics and administrators will find much to ponder over in thse paradoxes and revelations.

August 1995

Mina Swaminathan
Series Editor

MOVING UP TO SCHOOL

COMMUNITY PRESCHOOLS FOR THE RURAL POOR

ABOUT THIS VOLUME

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1 THE CONTEXT

Kindergartens, creches and day-care centres may be a normal way of life for the middle-class urban child, but is a rarity to the young child of the rural poor. Though the ICDS (Integrated Child Development Services) has proved that investing in child development goes a long way in developing human resources, the primary educational needs of rural children are often neglected in favour of higher education. Many NGOs, however, are attempting to establish pre-primary schools in rural areas.

It is precisely in this context that the community-based model of preschool programme developed by the Palmyrah Workers' Development Society (PWDS) is of great significance. The approach of PWDS to the care and education of young children of palmyrah workers and other rural artisans is pragmatic and need-oriented, and could be an alternative model for the rural poor. The main objective of PWDS is to improve the socio-economic conditions of the weaker sections of the rural mass, especially palmyrah tappers and other rural artisans, by inviting them to participate in their own development, thus leading to the development of the nation. The thrust is on community organisation for participatory development, with emphasis on social justice, awareness education, community participation and self-reliance. The identified needs, the response of the people, insights and skills acquired from experience and the availability of human and financial resources are some of the major factors determining the growth of each phase.

Poverty in abundance?

The year was 1977. Dr. Samuel Amirtham was travelling to his home town Parasala passing through Tirunelveli and Kanyakumari districts. A humanitarian and socially concerned activist as he was, the sorry plight of the palmyrah workers amidst the abundant palmyrah trees on either side of the road, raised several questions in his mind. This concern paved the way for the establishment of the Palmyrah Tappers Study project in 1977, which made a detailed survey on the socio-economic condition of the palmyrah workers. Even while the survey was in progress, PWDS was formed and registered in August 1977 (Appendix 1)

The palmyrah tree, which grows in the states of Tamilnadu, Andhra Pradesh, West Bengal, Kerala and Karnataka, is an important one among the sugar-yielding varieties of the palm family. The trees are usually very tall, each measuring from 90 to 100 feet in height. The palmyrah industry, known for its economic potentialities, is one of the oldest traditional village industries in the country, and is

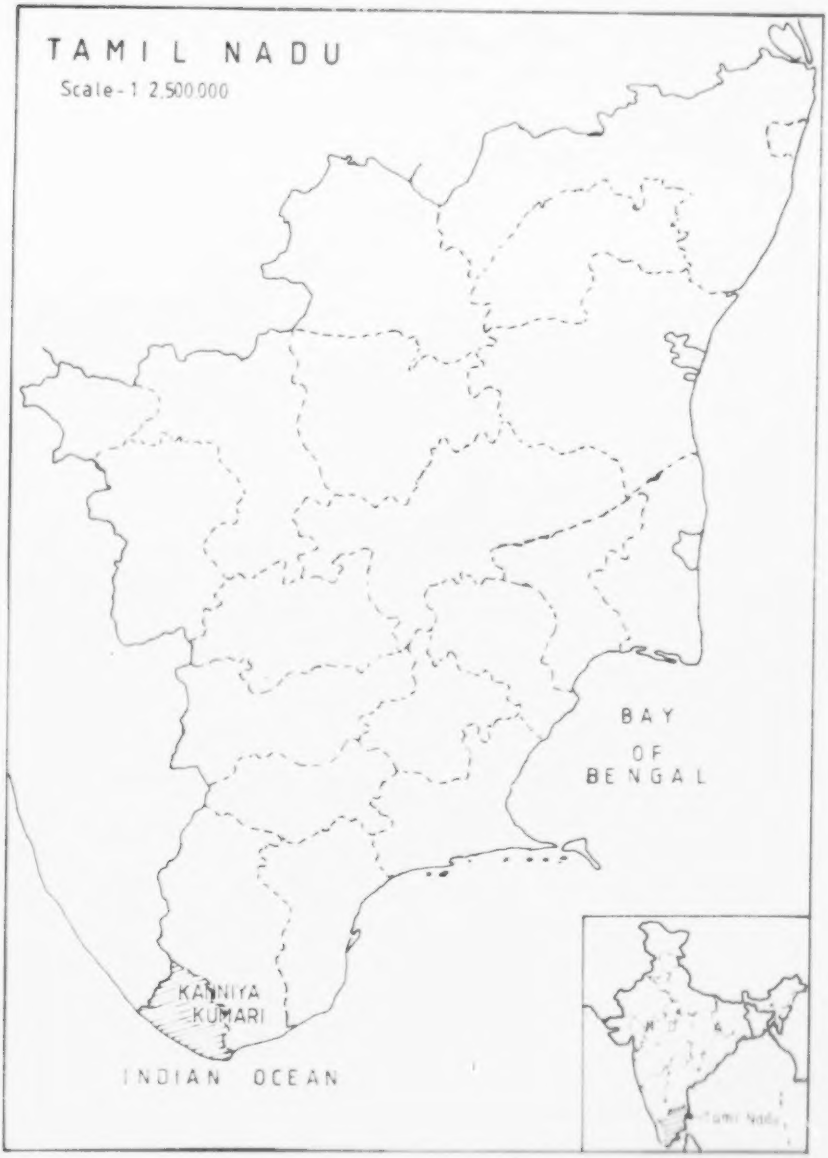
TAMIL NADU
Scale-1:2,500,000
BAY OF BENGAL
KANNIYA KUMARI
INDIAN OCEAN
INDIA
Tamil Nadu

Fig.1 Kanya Kumari Dist. in Tamil Nadu (Inset : Tamil Nadu, India)

responsible for the production of a number of edible and non-edible products. The root is used for basket-making, the timber for house construction, cot-making and walking sticks, the petiole of the young tree for fencing of gardens and the leaf for roofing, packing and manufacture of fancy articles. *Neera*, tender fruits, ripe fruits, edible roots, jaggery, candy, sugar and liquid jaggery are some of the edible products.

Tough and risky job

The palmyrah workers inherit tapping as an occupation and as no major change is likely in the employment market for alternative occupations, this may remain their major occupation for many years to come. Their problems are complex as they are occupational as well as social and economic in character. The per capita income is well below the poverty line.

Very few tappers own palmyrah trees, the trees being taken either on lease or on '*varam* system' (50:50 sharing basis). Tapping is not only a laborious task, but climbing a palmyrah tree involves a lot of risk. A skilled process requiring concentration, it calls for physical strength and energy to climb 30 to 40 trees in a single day. The monetary benefits for such a risky job are very low. Added to this, their families are large, creating problems of food and employment, and their meagre income is not adequate to support them. This causes exploitation of labour and results in

Climbing to work

Daily chore with smoke galore

hungry households. They are unfortunately not able to find additional employment, lacking both strength and opportunity to do other jobs. Since palmyrah is a seasonal crop, it offers full employment for a period of five months only; so during the off-season, the workers take up coolie work or migrate to other districts for tapping, which is not well-paying either. The tappers are, therefore, trapped in a cycle of poverty.

Too tired to think/change

Palmyrah workers have little social life and keep to traditional modes of living. Their children are ill-clad and under-fed. They live in poorly-built houses with just one or two rooms, which includes the kitchen. Lack of sanitation and unhygienic food contribute to the poor health of the women and children. The process of making jaggery, which is still in its primitive form, takes place within the household itself. The entire family of the worker is involved in boiling the *neera*. Since dry leaves and cashew shells are used as substitutes for fire-wood, and as there is no chimney in the house for the outlet of smoke, the entire soot settles on the unplastered walls, and the dense smoke is inhaled by the wives and children of the artisans. As the whole day is occupied in this process, the women and children sometimes find no time to even have a bath. Malnutrition, and their living conditions, make them vulnerable to all kinds of diseases. What intervention would be meaningful to them?

2 THE PROCESS

Help our children to learn

The planning of a community-based programme should stem from the needs of the community. Besides those which are felt by the community, there are other critical needs, the importance of which has not been identified by them; and in such cases, it becomes necessary to sensitise the community to these needs, perhaps through attitudinal changes brought about among parents and communities through education programmes. The need for preschool education was one such requirement that found expression when some social workers approached the tappers.

The Report on the socio-economic conditions of the palmyrah workers, published by PWDS in 1978, also revealed, among other factors, the total neglect of the educational needs of the children in rural areas. To quote from the survey Report -

> *The palmyrah workers are very backward in education, which may be attributed to their social and cultural backwardness too. As they are generally ignorant of things, they become the target of exploitation in society. Since most of them do not have basic education, they consider themselves as inferiors in society.*

Table 1. **Literacy levels of palmyrah workers**

Level	Percentage
Elementary	30.0
Higher elementary	6.0
High school	0.5
Illiterate	63.5
Total	100.0

But behind these figures lay a powerful yearning for education. Though these workers had little or no formal education, they recognised its importance, wanted to educate their children and hoped to improve their social status in the long run.

Causes for illiteracy

Nearly 70% of the workers pointed out that their low income made it impossible for them to educate their children. But it should not be concluded that low income is the only obstacle to the education of their children. When workers were persuaded to explain why they did not send their children to school, two different kinds of answers were obtained. One version was that the elder child was retained at home to look after the younger ones, and the other was that children were sent as coolies to work in cashew processing units to supplement the income of the family. They are fully aware that this state of affairs is detrimental to their future, and realise that they will be at a disadvantage because of illiteracy.

In a tapper's family, the husband goes out for tapping morning and afternoon. The wife helps him in collecting *neera* (palm juice), and also collects firewood for the boiling of *neera* to make jaggery. The eldest daughter, often herself of preschool age, has to mind her infant sibling while her mother goes out to work. This is doubly disadvantageous. Herself in need of care, she is deprived of schooling, while the infant deserves better care. Since day care centres were not available in rural areas,the children had to walk to distant places crossing many hurdles like streams and slushy paddy fields. For girls, especially, the long distance is one of the reasons for non-enrolment. Repeated demands from the Women's Movement for locating child care centres within or near the girls' schools have not been taken up. Further, parents tend to view costs of schooling their girls as high.

Both boys and girls were put to work at an early age in their own small farms and in the tapping industry itself. They work from early morning, collecting either fire-wood or palm-juice and helping in the process of converting the palm juice into jaggery. Children of preschool age were left wandering around, causing nuisance to parents and neighbours.

Armed for work

Girls play their part

The first response

Responding to the needs of the community and aware that the early years of a child's life are crucial years for its future education and that the physical, social, emotional and psychological needs of the young child could be effectively fulfilled through early childhood education, PWDS identified 10 educated girls from villages and motivated them to start the first community preschool centres, in January 1978, with free food from CASA (Churches Auxiliary for Social Action). The objectives then were:

- To function as a day-care centre to relieve the rural working mothers from the burden of baby-sitting.
- To prepare, motivate and facilitate the children to go to school and to reduce drop out at the primary and secondary stage.

It was not easy for the preschool teachers to enrol the children. The tappers had to be convinced of the need for preschool as a step to school. The link between preschool and formal education had yet to be established. Besides, the educated and the well-to-do in the community did not encourage the tappers to send their children to elementary school. 90% of children under 10 years did not attend any school and the rest attended those run by the Roman Catholic Church. The parents who wanted to send their children to school couldn't have afforded books. Detention in classes also affected parents' attitudes, but the relentless efforts and the conviction of the teachers began to yield results.

The relentless efforts of the teachers began to yield results.

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3 THE BLOSSOMING

By June 1978, 17 feeding centres were supported by CASA, apart from the pre-school centres (without feeding) with more than 1,000 children on roll. In the feeding centres, 105 gms of wheat and 18 gms of soya bean oil was provided to each child per day. Wheat rava was made into *uppuma* mixed with soyabean oil. The programme was run so successfully that CASA recognised PWDS as its contact organisation for its Mother and Child Health (MCH) programmes. By June 1980, the number of preschool centres increased to 76 and by 1981, a close contact was established with 3,000 families through 90 preschool centres.

This number peaked in 1990 to 123 centres (Fig.2). Unemployed local girls, preferably tappers' daughters, with high school qualifications were trained as health workers at the Kottar Social Service Society and they later took charge of the preschool and feeding centres. The teachers also attended a crash orientation course for 10 days in Madurai to learn the basic concepts of education, teaching methodologies, book-keeping and child psychology. The resource persons were mostly social workers, counsellors and educationists associated with NGOs. The teachers were involved in the nursery for half a day and they spent the rest of the day visiting tappers' women-folk. Here, they made them aware of health and hygiene, the importance of prenatal medical care, which they could get from primary Health Centres, and the relevance of postnatal care to bring down child mortality to the barest minimum. PWDS was able to gain an entry point and establish a rapport with the families of palmyrah tappers and other rural artisans through such programmes.

The growth of the preschool centres also strengthened the women's programmes, health education and other allied activities of PWDS. Parents' meetings were held once in six months. The parents evinced keen interest and tremendous enthusiasm for such meetings where several issues related to women and children such as women's education, gender rights, economic backwardness of women, employment for women, dowry menace, thrift and savings were discussed.

Initially 50 paise per month from each child was collected in centres giving food and 25 paise in non-food centres. The amount thus collected was used to give sweets during festival times. The beneficiaries' contribution alone amounted to Rs.7,161.25 during 1980-81. At about this time, food aid from abroad was stopped and from 1980 to 1982 CASA supplied milk powder instead. The health workers in charge of preschool centres were relieved for full time work in the Women's

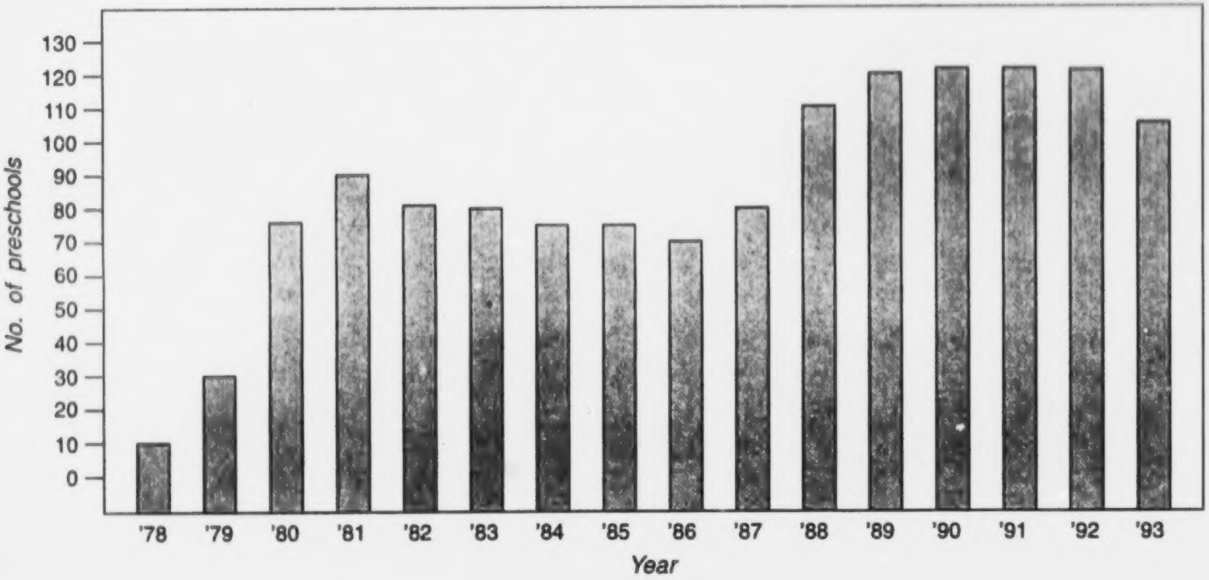

Fig.2 Growth of preschool centres

Programme and voluntary child care workers with high school education were selected. Only an allowance of Rs.30/- per month was given to them, not a salary. Parents were encouraged to pay a small fee ranging from Rs.2/- to Rs.5/- to the teacher as their contribution from the community. This fee collection along with the PWDS allowance was a motivating factor for the child care workers. Deserving women, especially widows, were appointed as *ayahs* (helpers).

Food for the mind or the body?

In 1982, the Tamil Nadu Government initiated the Midday Meals Programme for school-going and preschool children, a massive statewide welfare programme which still provides the children with at least one nutritious meal a day, including Sundays. Due to the immediate impact of this scheme, fifteen centres were withdrawn in 1982 to avoid duplication, and another five centres in 1983. A dilemma arose whether to continue the day-care centres or close them down, since the Government was making alternative arrangements.

CASA also stopped the supply of milk powder as the project was over and hence all the food centres were merged with the Government Noon Meal Centres. The concerned preschool teachers wanted to run their centres as non-food centres, but most of the parents opted for a meal for their children. Hence, all such centres were closed and the teachers were found jobs in other centres. The focus henceforth was on education and not on food. After consultations with the community on the issue, it was decided to start new centres only on request from areas where the Government had not started Noon Meal Centres. But some guidelines were formed for either starting a new day-care centre or retaining the existing ones.

Mothers eke out a living

Fresh territories - some guidelines

The remoteness of the area, participation from the people and the qualification and aptitude of the teacher from the local area, were factors taken into account while deciding the opening of a centre. The village should be able to provide a place free of cost for running the centre, and the minimum number of children in each centre should be twenty. Only remote areas with no access to the Noon Meal scheme should be selected. Even those preschool teachers who had centres near their residences had to shift their centres to deserving areas two to three kilometres away from their residence. Since most of the parents were also worried about the education of their children as well as the nutrition aspect, a working arrangement was negotiated between the Noon Meal Centres and the preschool teachers. There are about ten such centres of PWDS even today where the children get preschool education and then go for a meal to the Government centres.

The teachers were given periodic in-service training to make them aware of the socio-economic trends of modern times, in addition to refresher courses in child education. Monthly seminars for teachers were conducted by college professors and PWDS staff who served as resource persons.

For rainy days

In September 1984, a Savings Scheme for the mothers of the children was started. Since the tappers' work was seasonal, and there were not many alternative jobs, it was felt that saving for the lean period would come in handy and alleviate their sufferings. Moreover, there was no saving habit among the tappers and they usd to borrow heavily from greedy moneylenders at high interest rates ranging from 36 to 100% per annum. The dowry system also made them debtors. Hence, as a development intervention, PWDS introduced the savings scheme for the mothers. To start with, the mothers were motivated to keep aside a handful of rice (*Pidi Arisi*) everyday as savings in kind to help them feed family members during the off-season. As the scheme took momentum, the mothers were encouraged to save money.

Twenty-eight preschool teachers came forward to serve as animators to encourage more mothers to join the scheme. 918 mothers from rural areas willingly joined the scheme. The idea was to collect a minimum of Re.1 a day from each member and deposit the amount in the bank. Amazingly, the total collection from September to 31st March 1985, was Rs 1,36,440.70. When the first Annual Meeting of the Savings Scheme was held in September '85, there were 1,620 depositors who had put in Rs 2,54,885 /- as their savings for the whole year. The Scheme also strengthened the bond between PWDS and the tapper community. It was then decided to give the teachers an incentive allowance of 4% of the money collected through savings. Thus the scheme helped the teachers also to earn additional income.

The savings scheme is not interest-based but incentive-based. The members do

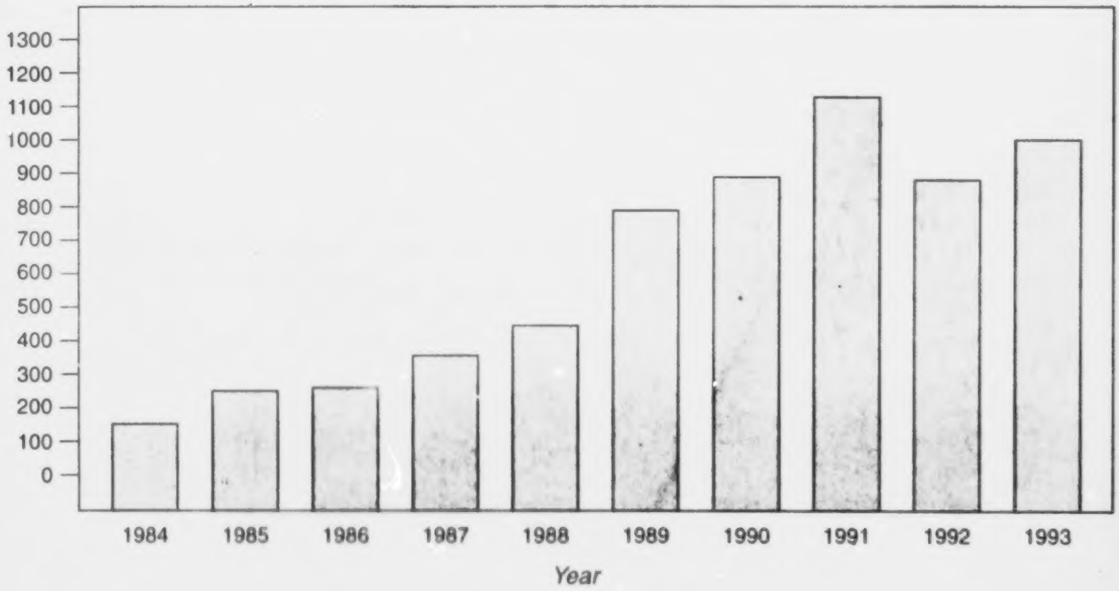

Fig.3 Growth of savings scheme

Table 2 **Growth of the movement**

Years	Total no. of children	Total savings (Rs.)	Number of preschools
1989-90	2,793	7,88,650	120
1990-91	3,068	8,93,464	123
1991-92	3,150	11,23,855	123
1992-93	2,953	8,87,206	122
1993-94	2,605	10,13,208	106

not expect any loans from their savings nor are they worried about the interest. The interest earned from the bank for the savings is distributed as incentive for the teachers and for the members who save more than Rs. 1000/- per year. (Fig.3)

Breaking down narrow domestic walls

The mothers' meetings, held once a month, discuss various topics on child psychology, health and hygiene, environment, family planning, budgetting, nutrition and small savings. Since the mothers constitute a changing group, it was suggested that they have a permanent structure formed at the village level. In some villages, they have been willing to form a village organisation and bring under it all the developmental activities.

As on 31st March 1994, there are 106 pre-school centres with 2,605 children on roll. Most of the centres enjoy financial support from PWDS in the form of a teacher's allowance and minimum materials. 3,898 mothers, including mothers of former preschool students and other village women, have joined as members of the Savings Scheme, saving Rs 10,13,208/- during 1993-94. (Table 2)

Around 3898 families participated in the Savings Scheme and on an average each mother has saved Rs.260/- per annum which comes to around Rs.21.70 per month. Since the womenfolk are sellers of *neera* and jaggery and also take up coolie work in brick making, tailoring and beedi making, the little cash flow in their hands, rightly motivated and jointly ventured, has resulted in a staggering saving amount of more than Rs.10 lakhs per year.

The growth of the preschool centres also strengthened the women's programmes, health, education and other allied activities.

4 THE PRESCHOOLS AT WORK

Preschool facilities

What is the broad picture of preschools today? Table 3 shows the percentage distribution of various preschool parameters such as location, ownership of building, seating facilities, working hours and monthly fees.

Table 3 **Preschool facilities**

Location of school	
Village	94.18
Town	5.82
School buildings	
Owned	40.00
Rented	60.00
Seating facilities	
Mats	93.75
Chairs	5.00
Floor	1.25
Working hours	
Below 3 hours	46.60
3-5 hours	40.90
Above 5 hours	12.50
Monthly fees	
Rs. 2	6.19
Rs. 3	1.23
Rs. 5	91.35
Rs. 10	1.23

Note : All figures in percentages

It is interesting to note that the community is by and large prepared to provide the necessary infrastructural support to make the programme a success.

A typical preschooler

It was the dawn of another day for the residents of Serukaravilai, a small hamlet near Marthandam, mostly inhabited by palmyrah tappers and agricultural labourers. Shyla Rani, a four-year-old girl, got up with sleepy eyes from the torn mat. Her father, a coolie working in a rubber sheet shop, was getting ready for work. Her mother who does odd jobs now and then for a paltry sum doled out in the name of wages, was busy preparing food for the family. The menu for the day is boiled tapioca roots to go with pond fish curry. Their usual midday meal is tapioca boiled with palmyrah juice. Shyla has an elder sister and two younger brothers. Her elder sister was baby-sitting for Shyla and the brothers till six months ago. Now promoted to the office of house-keeping, she shouted orders at Shyla to wake up her two younger brothers and clean them up. The cleaning done, Shyla with one boy on her hip and holding another by hand, went to the nearby temple to play. It was also her duty to feed her brothers at meal times. This has been her daily routine for the past six months, until the day when Miss

K.Chandramathi, a single woman with a School Leaving Certificate who works as a preschool teacher, encountered Shyla Rani playing with her brothers under a tree near the temple. Had this been her first experience, Chandramathi would have been shocked to see the children in such squalid conditions. But used to encounters of this kind, the teacher requested Shyla to escort her to the hut. It was an arduous task for Chandramathi before she could convince Shyla's parents to send the children to the preschool. Who would look after the two-year-old kid, was the problem posed. When it was explained to them that the day care centre was the answer, the parents very reluctantly sent the children to the preschool. It was a memorable experience for Shyla Rani, dressed up in her best clothes, going to school with her elder sister and younger brother, with excitement writ large on their faces. Chandramathi has twenty five such children enrolled for 1994, their age level ranging from 2 to 5 years. The average daily attendance is 23. The school is housed in a small verandah of a house given by the village community for free use. The floor of the verandah is plastered with clay with a generous coat of cow dung smeared over it.

Exposure to a new world

The preschool starts at 9.30 in the morning, with common worship. Songs, praising God the Almighty, are sung in chorus followed by a short prayer recited together from memory. No reference is made to any particular God or religion. The teacher tells a moral story, followed by recitation of rhymes in English and the vernacular. Then the teacher unfolds the number chart and alphabet chart supplied to the school free of cost by PWDS and sets the mood for some learning to take place. While the older children repeat numbers and alphabets, the smaller ones try to imitate them.They have plenty of outdoor activities too.Chandramathi joins them in their fun and frolic. The parents are so happy about the change in the mental and moral attitude of their children, that they have come forward to pay a monthly contribution of Rs.5/- to the school.

In a year or two, the school will become self- reliant. – Chandramathi.

Exciting the child's curiosity

Though the teaching is very informal and flexible, the focus is on making the children learn the three 'R's. For the new entrants, the alphabet in Tamil and English are taught orally. In the second year, they learn to write the alphabets. They are also exposed to some general knowledge by learning the names of animals, birds, fruits, vegetables, names of transport, colours and shapes.

The teacher also makes the students answer a few simple questions in English, and

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a child who has regularly attended the centre for two years will be able to answer simple questions in English.

Formal greetings like *Good Morning* and *Good Evening* and courteous responses like *Thank you* and *I am sorry* are taught. Occasionally they are taken out of their class room and into the countryside for a nature walk. The children observe the trees, plants and insects around them and learn their names. In the afternoons, it is mostly painting and enjoying minor games. The children get into the habit of working and playing together and are equipped to enter primary school.

Why teach the alphabets and numbers in the English language when in fact the children will be admitted in Tamil medium primary schools? – the teacher was asked.

Taken aback for a moment and then contemplating for a while, Chandramathi replied –

Well, what else to teach? That is what the parents want. Won't the English language help them in future? Is there any other alternative? This is what we have been doing for years together.

Community support

Mrs. A.Kamalabai, a trained Tamil Pandit, who has been a preschool teacher for ten years in a school housed at Payanam Church building has a nine-year-old mentally retarded child on roll. Annie was brought to the school by her mother when she was five years old. She looked horrible and dirty with saliva dribbling

Open air classroom

from the mouth and mucus playing hide and seek in her nostrils.

Her father, being a drunkard, does not take care of the family. Annie's mother is a maid-servant. Now, after 4 years in the preschool, Annie looks very neat and tidy. She is even able to read and write a little and recite rhymes. Though Kamalabai is very affectionate to all the thirty-three children in the school, she is especially proud of Annie.

This centre is a typical example of the participation of the community, the Church relating with a voluntary development organisation. The Payanam Church has provided accommodation, furniture and other amenities free of cost. The Church also pays the electricity charges and provides free food for the seventy-year-old widow who works as an *ayah* in the school. The *ayah* has been with the school for more than 10 years, with a monthly allowance. She has a handicapped daughter who fends for herself working in a cashewnut factory. The teacher finds the *ayah* very cooperative and trustworthy.

Mixed reactions

But not all mothers could be so easily motivated. Mrs.Thangabai, a parent of Therivilai centre, for example, is willing to pay a monthly contribution of Rs.5/- if lunch is provided in the school. If not, she would prefer to put her children in the Noon Meal Centres. When questioned, she said that her husband did some coolie work now and then and received wages mostly in kind and not money.

Why shouldn't I make use of the Government welfare measures – she quipped.

Her two boys, Rathish (four years old) and Ramesh (two and a half years) have shown a great deal of improvement after joining the preschool. But as a mother, she prefers to see them eat well.

Mrs. Jeyanthi has a different story to tell. Her son Livin (six years) was in Therivilai centre for three years and now he is doing very well in the Government Middle School, Paravai. He stands first in the class and bags prizes in sports and games. She strongly supports the scheme and feels that parents should not grudge paying Rs.5 or Rs.10 to make the centre self-supporting. In fact, the Therivilai preschool is housed in the verandah of Jeyanthi's house. A nominal monthly rent of Rs.10/- is paid to her. In one corner of the verandah, Jeyanthi keeps her handloom and works on it from morning till evening. Would it not be disturbing to the students who share the same verandah?

Not at all, says Miss Sarathabai who has been teaching in the same premises for six years. *We are least disturbed or diverted. The children are so much used to the* "tik tak" *sound of the hand loom , that they do not even feel its existence. Not even the baby of the class, the one-and-a-half year-old Anisha.* But then, she has no other choice, either.

Not only mentally retarded children and hand looms, but even uncontrollable problematic children are so meticulously handled by the preschool teachers as part of the day's work. Shibu was one-and-a-half years old when Mrs. Kanaga Rajam heard about him from another parent and went to see him in his house. He was found tied to the leg of a cot with rope. On seeing a new visitor, the boy struggled to untie the knot, but could not succeed. The parents told the teacher that the boy was very naughty and mischievous. Kanaga Rajam explained to them that Shibu might be very brilliant and hyperactive and it was foolish of them to have imagined him to be a demon. A child is a bundle of love and power, and every child has in him something divine. Children are clear-sighted observers too, and such barbarous acts would upset their morale and psychology. She asked them to release him immediately and carried him to school. Shibu is now two-and a-half years old and the most well-behaved child in the preschool. The parents are very surprised to see the behavioural change in Shibu.

Kanaga Rajam, who has put in 15 years of service in the PWDS pre-school programme, says -

A mothers' meeting held once a month is the best forum to teach child psychology and child care. Exposing the mothers' to new ideas and insights on child rearing is a gratifying experience. Though there are only 18 members in a group,the monthly savings amount to more than Rs.2,000/-. The mothers are willing to contribute even Rs.10/-per month to the school.

The real rewards

Does the teacher meet the alumni now and then? *Quite often,* says, Kanaga Rajam. *My first set of students are now 15 years old and studying at the secondary level. During my house visits I am happy to see my childrens evolve into matured and refined beings. When the younger ones shift from preschools to regular schools, they assume leadership and teach songs and alphabets to the students in the new schools.*

The Thozhikodu preschool is privileged in that it is visited quite often by health workers from the nearby health centre and treated with vitamin pills, polio drops and vaccines. The teacher, Mrs. N. Kamala, and her husband go out every morning to pick up the children. The whole family is involved, and help one another in the school activities.

Even more than their learning experience, the children are very happy in being together in one place. It is an exhilarating

A child is a bundle of love and power, and every child has in him something divine feeling to experience the fun of being a part of child community, and watch them develop social relationshiops in the process.

Mrs. Anand Evangeline, the women's programme coordinator who is also cordinating the preschool programme of the West Zone, says that reaching the preschool child provides easy access to the family, and in a wider sense facilities the total development of the community. Preschool centres make it easier toestablish contact with rural families for enabling economic programmes.

Success stories

Miss Krishnaveni, who coordinates the preschool programme of the East Zone, says that since the preschool system of PWDS is very informal and flexible, no hard and fast rules are laid down regarding admission procedure, syllabus and the working hours of the school. She adds –

> *The educational need of the community is the primary concern. Children who attend the preschools are really motivated to go to regular schools. It isn't surprising to note that those who have had preschool experience have performed much better than the new entrants. We are also happy to note that the pre-school children do not become drop-outs but get at least their higher secondary certificates. One student holds a Master's degree in Science. Seeing the educational development and behavioural changes of their children, the villagers render full cooperation and willingly provide facilities for conducting classes.*

Jeyanthi, whose son was a former student at Therivilai preschool centre, is very proud that her son takes keen interest in his studies in the primary school. Going by the report of the class teacher of her son, she is happy that he performed better in listening comprehension, sequential thinking and personal social skills than the rest of the class who have had no access to preschool education. Jeyanthi's son Livin, when asked whether he liked going to school, nodded in affirmation. He looked smart in neat clothes and was a bit shy to talk to a stranger. When asked for his impression about his preschool days, Livin said with a shy smile -

> *It was good. I was very happy. The teacher was full of love and kindness. She didn't beat anyone. She taught us many songs.*

Does he remember what he learnt in the preschool? Livin was hesitant at first, but when encouraged by the mother, he started reciting in one breath, the rhymes, the alphabets and numbers he had learnt in English. Does he like the present school?

> *Yes. But the teacher beats all the students quite often. I am spared because I study well. I stand first in the class.*

When a few teachers of the Paravai Government Middle School were asked their opinion about the children who have had preschool education, they all unanimously expressed the opinion that these children preformed much better than the rest of the class. Their regular attendance, their readiness

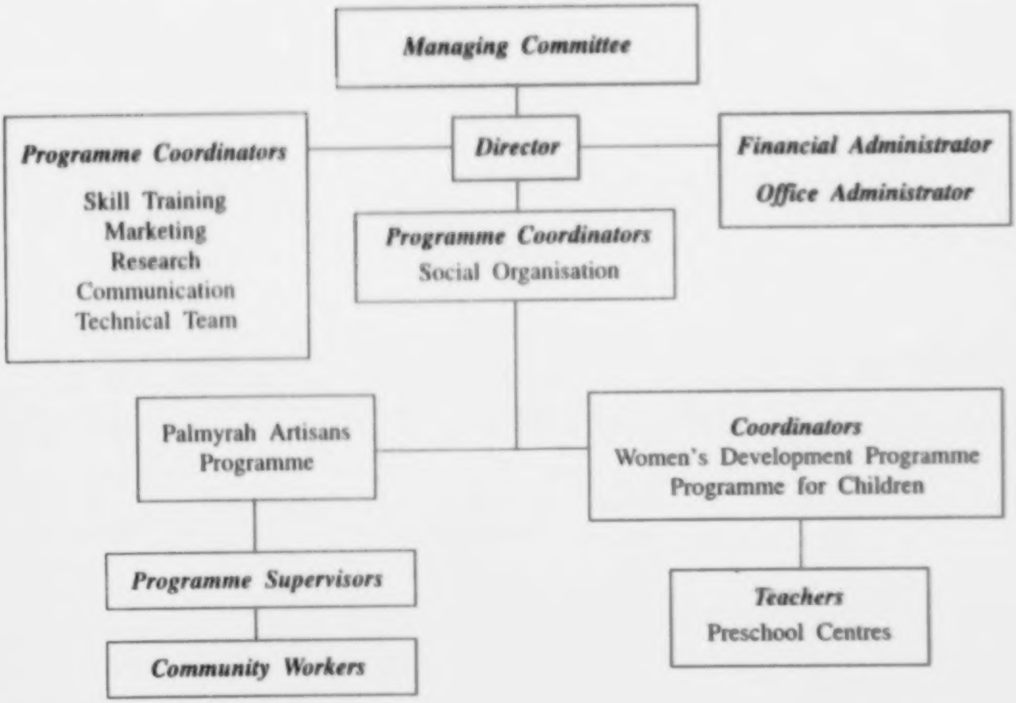

Managing Committee
Programme Coordinators
Skill Training
Marketing
Research
Communication
Technical Team
Director
Financial Administrator
Office Administrator
Programme Coordinators
Social Organisation
Palmyrah Artisans Programme
Coordinators
Women's Development Programme
Programme for Children
Programme Supervisors
Community Workers
Teachers
Preschool Centres

Fig.4 Organogram

to learn, response to teaching inputs and the cordial relationship they maintain with their mates and above all the self-confidence they have developed during the preschool years, make them stand apart.

Opportunities for sharing

For the sake of convenience, the whole project area of PWDS has been divided into East and West Zones, with a Programme Coordinator in charge of each zone. The coordinators directly report to the Director who is helped by the Managing Committee under the Presidentship of Dr. Samuel Amirtham. Each Coordinator is assisted by an office assistant. The West Zone has 51 preschool centres and the East, 55. (Fig 4)

A common meeting for both zones is held once a month, usually on salary day, in which all the pre-school teachers participate. Monthly reports are submitted to the coordinators followed by a discussion, and lesson plans for the next month are planned. Resource persons are invited for special lectures. It is usually an occasion for all the teachers to meet together and share their views and experiences, a day for fun and laughter. Lunch time sees them in groups, sharing and enjoying their meals.

Apart from this, there is a separate meeting at the zonal level every third Saturday. Decisions regarding the celebration of important national and religious festivals are taken at the zonal meetings. Responsibilities are shared after a participatory discussion. A report on the savings collection, attendance in mothers' meetings and the number of houses visited is submitted by each teacher. There is also a sharing session in which interesting events and happenings are shared and reflected upon.

Their regular attendance, their readiness to learn, response to teaching inputs and the cordial relationship they maintain with their mates and above all the self-confidence they have developed during the preschool years, make them stand apart.

5 THE CHILD CARE WORKER

Inspirations

Vijayakumari was 22 years old with a school leaving certificate in her hand. Her native place Pazhawar, Kuzhithurai, in Kanyakumari district, lacked educational facilities. The need for a preschool in the area motivated Vijayakumari to open the first day-care centre on June 1, 1976 in Pazhawar. Twenty seven students in the age group 2 - 4 years were enrolled. Two years later, this centre was recognized by PWDS to receive support. Vijayakumari is now 40 years old with 18 years of service as a child care worker. Initially she received only Rs.50/- as monthly allowance but with an annual increment of Rs.25/-, her present monthly allowance is Rs.300/-.

She recollects the days when she was unemployed, not knowing what to do. The future looked dark and bleak. During a casual talk with one of her friends who was also unemployed, the conversation changed to how best their available time could be used. Why not do something for the community, they thought. The need for early childhood education in the area kindled their desire to open a preschool. When they approached some of the parents, the response was not encouraging. But the persuasive skills and the conviction of these two determined girls won over the villagers. Vijayakumari's family backed her fully, which, she says, was like a tonic. Their relentless efforts soon saw 27 students on roll. As a teacher she derives joy and satisfaction in the presence of children. Her family problems cease to exist the moment she enters the classroom.

In 1979, she got married to a Government employee who had a transferable job. Fortunately for Vijayakumari, her husband saw eye to eye with her commitment and yearning to continue as a teacher. While marriage becomes a handicap for many such teachers to continue their profession, it was a source of strength to Vijayakumari. The husband and wife, after a lengthy discussion, agreed that even if the husband were to be

As a teacher she derives joy and satisfaction in the presence of children. Her family problems cease to exist the moment she enters the classroom.

transferred to some other place, Vijayakumari would stay in Pazhawar. Not only her husband but also her grown-up son is very cooperative. Of course there were times when her family responsibilities almost forced her to leave the job. There were complaints from the family when she came home late after conducting mothers' meetings. On their occasional visits to the school, her husband and son would feel uncomfortable when they saw her cleaning the tiny tots who had answered nature's call right in the middle of the class room. Vijayakumari does not have the help of an ayah but has one more teacher to assist her. At present she has 30 students who are divided into two groups, aged 2 to 3, and above 3 years.

Parents' joy

Unlike the other preschools of the same nature, the Pazhawar centre works full day from 9.30 in the morning till 4.30 in the evening. It is indeed a whole day relief for the parents. The day starts with Vijayakumari ushering in the children. She always finds some nice words to say to the children and the parents who escort them. There is no fixed monthly contribution from the parents. Those who can afford it, pay Rs.5/- and those who can't, pay Rs.2/-, while some do not pay at all. But whatever amount is paid is received without grudge or complaint. Vijayakumari collects Rs.5000/- per month by way of small savings and sometimes reaches more than Rs.70,000/- per annum. She receives not less than Rs.200/- per month as incentive for mobilising savings, calculated at the rate of 4% of the total amount collected. She has also won a special prize for collecting the maximum amount in a year.

> After a few months in the centre, the twins were the most well-behaved children in the class. They even assumed leadership of the class during the second year and were found to be very friendly, cordial and helpful to their mates

Does she have any memorable moments to talk about? There is the incident of the twins brought to the school by the mother. The children wouldn't go to anyone at all except the mother. Even the father and the elder children in the family could not enjoy the pleasure of carrying the beautiful twins in their arms. To add to this, they were naughty and whined most of the time. If anyone tried to cajole them, they would beat or spit at the person. After a few months in the centre, the twins were the most well-behaved children in the class. They even assumed leadership of the class during the second year and were found to be very friendly, cordial and helpful to their mates. Vijayakumari is very happy to note that the twins after completing preschool are now scoring well in all the subjects in the Government primary school.

The teacher benefits too

Has her involvement in the preschool programme contributed in anyway to her growth? *Certainly,* says Vijayakumari. *Eighteen years ago when I decided to involve myself in the preschool programme, I was timid, shy and uncommunicative. I did not even have basic knowledge about child psychology or pre-primary education. I was totally ignorant about men and matters. But now, the several training programmes I have attended in Bangalore, Madurai, Kanyakumari and other places have helped me to evolve as a better teacher. The associations and contacts I have established with parents, resource persons and Government officials have opened my eyes to the outer world. Such contacts make me feel that I am loved and respected by people around me. This has given me more self confidence and enhanced my self-esteem. I have also developed myself as a good public speaker. I never hesitate to raise questions in monthly meetings and public forums. I feel elated as I gain new insights day by day. I also believe that the more I receive the more I should give.*

A glorious experience

Miss A. Glory Little Jaya, a single preschool teacher at the Kunna Vilagam centre, has her Higher Secondary Certificate with a certificate in Teacher Training. Her father, who is 55 years old, is a quarry worker. She has four brothers younger than her and an elder sister. Her elder sister is unemployed. Her father's work is seasonal and affected by rain and other natural calamities.

How did she become a preschool teacher? Since the family was finding it difficult to make both ends meet, Glory requested a friend of hers working as a preschool teacher to help her find a job which might bring in an income of at least Rs.100/- per month. When she approached PWDS through her friend, she was asked whether there were enough children in her area to start a preschool centre. The need for community participation was also stressed. Glory then conducted a survey, identified some children, and started a preschool centre with the help of the elders from the community.

Does her present job in any way contribute to solving the financial problem of the family? Glory says that her earning is the major regular income for the family, and meets the basic needs of the family. Her remuneration has also helped to buy books and note-books for her brothers.

If Glory has become a preschool teacher mainly for solving her financial burden, will she join some other organisation if more remuneration is offered? *Never,* says Glory. *There are caste problems in centres run by several others. There is no job security either. A teacher is appointed or dismissed at the whim and fancy of the management. Besides,* *there is no scope for working independently. Since this centre has been started with the support of a secular non-government organisation, the whole community, irrespective of caste or creed, own the centre as theirs. I am indeed proud to associate with such a centre.*

Glory has 20 children in her centre who contribute Rs.5/- each per month. This amount was decided by the parents themselves, who willingly pay their share every month. The local Primary Health Centre supplies basic medicines free of cost to the children. Is it possible for the centre to become self-supporting?

Not in the near future. The community will find it very difficult to support the teacher and maintain the centre. If the monthly contribution of parents is gradually increased over a period of time, self-reliance might become a reality in the future.

Mutual benefits

Has her seven years of experience helped her personal growth? *Without any doubt,* says Glory. *I have acquired communication and presentation skills. My stage fear has disappeared. I don't feel self conscious while in a group. The community gives me a lot of respect. When I attend weddings and other functions in the community, I am specially honoured for being the teacher of their children. My family members also treat me as a special case. More than the amount I earn, the very fact that I am occupied earns me respect. I am also able to mix easily with a lot of people when I go out for savings collection. The training programmes I have attended have proved very useful, much more than the formal Teacher Training Course I have finished. Besides, nothing can deprive me of the joy and satisfaction I get from being an instrument of change in the lives of poor children.*

Is she happy with her work? *Oh, sure!,* says Chandramathi. *I derive immense pleasure through my association with the small kids. The home visits during the afternoons and the mothers' meeting once a month make me feel that I am contributing my mite to society. The monthly allowance of Rs.275/- from PWDS, the 4% incentive from the savings amount I collect and the small fee paid by the parents help my family to a large extent.*

Kamalabai, with an unemployed husband and two children, says that the income she receives from PWDS is very useful. But the joy she receives through her work is much more than any money could compensate. She has a regular attendance of twenty persons in the mothers' meetings and is able to collect not less than Rs.1,000/- through the Savings Scheme. She has now motivated the mothers to pay a monthly contribution of Rs.5/- to the school to make it self-supporting. Appendix 2 gives a demographic profile of the teachers.

The whole community, irrespective of caste or creed, own the centre as theirs.

6 COSTS AND BENEFITS

While the impression of parents and teachers on the spread of education in the community give an indication of the impact of the programme, the costs and benefits have also to be considered from a financial angle. Table 4 shows the expenses under various heads for community preschools.

Table 4 **Expenses of community preschools**

	Rs.
Educational materials purchased for the centres	57,584
Training for teachers	29,856
Administrative expenses like stationery, postage etc.	2,449
Allowance to teachers	3,63,200
Miscellaneous	566
Total	4,53,655

The cost per child works out to Rs. 174/- per year and the cost per centre Rs. 4279/- per year. These costs include only the recurring expenditure, since the village people provide a place free of cost for running the centre.

A comparison has been attempted between the cost of a preschool run by PWDS and one set up by a private institution in Kanyakumari District. (Table 5)

The cost per child here is Rs.340 per year, or one-and-a-half times that of the community preschool.

Table 5 **Expenses of a private preschool**

Non-recurring	**Rs.**
Cost of building (240 sq.ft @ Rs.220 per sq.ft)	52,800
Furniture for the school	5,000
Total	57,800
Recurring (for 25 children)	
Educational material	1,000
Administrative expenses	1,000
Allowance to teachers @ Rs.500/- per month for a period of 12 months	6,000
Miscellaneous	500
Total	8,500

As far as non-recurring costs go, if the depreciation/maintenance is taken to be about Rs.6000 per year or Rs.500 a month, this is ultimately recovered from the parents through fees, where as the "free" accomodation given to PWDS is a cost voluntarily borne by the community.

It is significant that the expenses of PWDS include training of teachers, an item which is missing in the private institution. On an average, an amount of Rs.280 per year is spent in training per teacher, and Rs.3420 on allowances per teacher.

Educational achievements

Figures for Kanyakumari District as a whole show a sharp increase in the number of high and higher secondary schools and enrolment of both boys and girls between 1971 and 1991, while the number of primary schools and students at this level have remained more or less static. This may be an indication that fewer children are dropping out after primary school. The dramatic increase in literacy rates for the same period (from 64% to 75% for men and from 52% to 69% for women) could also have come about only because marginalised illiterates became literate. (Appendix 3)

Though these statistics cannot be directly linked to the impact of these community preschools, it has been observed that children who attend the preschool develop the habit of regularly attending classes after joining other schools. They do not generally become drop-outs as they at least finish their higher secondary level. It is estimated that of the 14,000 children from the preschools who have enrolled in school, only 142 dropped out without completing high school.

Employment

While it is difficult to quantify the benefits received from the preschools, a look at the employment generated by them shows that 106 teachers have been given employment in as many Centres, or to put it differently, for every 4279 rupees spent, one employment has been generated. The teachers have expressed that the monthly allowance of Rs.275/- from PWDS, the 4% incentive from the savings amount and the contribution paid by parents totalling Rs.490/- altogether makes a lot of difference to them. The total benefit thus obtained by 106 teachers in the year 1993-94 through this programme can be said to be Rs.6,23,280/-.*

Table 6 **Average income of a teacher**

	Rs.
Support from PWDS	285
For Health Care (Lay First Aider Work)	50
Margin in medicine sale	30
4% incentive from savings	50
Fee collection (20 children)	75
Total	490

---

* *Financial Analysis : S. Dhanalakshmi B.E., M.B.A., Lecturer, Thiagaraja School of Management, Madurai and Senior Consultant, DATA.*

Intangible gains

There are some other gains too, that cannot be quantified, but are revealed by the salient characteristics of the programme.

- The preschool teacher is identified from the village and trained, a modest attempt to identify and develop local leadership.
- Community participation is given the utmost importance. The preschool centres are mostly initiated by the community with all the members extending their full cooperation. PWDS comes in only as a support organisation providing training to the teachers, educational materials for the children and coordination to the centres.
- Even though the allowance paid to the teacher by PWDS, which mostly comes from overseas donor agencies, is not enough, attempts have been made to enhance the income of the teacher through collection of fees, incentive for savings mobilisation and allowance for health care.
- The preschool teacher is seen not as a mere teacher, but also as a multipurpose community worker. The programme is basically community-based and PWDS acts only as an enabler of the community rather than an employer of the teachers.
- The parents, especially the mothers, relieved from the burden of baby-sitting, are able to go to work and earn some extra income.
- Though the society was formed to uplift the palmyrah workers, the beneficiaries of the preschool programme include the agricultural labourers, coolies and other rural artisans in the area.

The preschool teacher is seen not as a mere teacher, but also as a multipurpose community worker. The programme is basically community-based and PWDS acts only as an enabler of the community rather than an employer of the teachers.

7 CHALLENGES AND DILEMMAS

The development of community preschools took place even though preschool education was not a priority to PWDS. Since the need for preschool emerged along with the other needs related to health and hygiene, one person had to play multiple roles of being a teacher-cum-community worker-cum-health care worker. The role spanned many activities such as savings mobilisation, health care, home visits and organising self-help groups and the education of children itself was not the focus of concentration. The teacher had little time to prepare her lessons or learning materials for the children. Since most of her time and energy was sapped by other activities, the teacher had little scope to display her enthusiasm and creativity in school activities. While at home, she was also fully engaged in household work. So, the teacher with too many irons on the fire, may not be able to ensure an effective preschool programme.

Role of a supervisor

Effective supervision is yet another major challenge. Today, the two coordinators of the East and West Zone, have the additional responsibility of supervising all the 106 centres, an all too daunting task. There should be at least one supervisor for 10 centres, implying a minimum requirement of 6 to 8 supervisors at the initial stage to cover all the centres. Regular supervision by someone who is an enabler and guide can enhance the efficiency and motivate teachers.

The issue of sustainability

The question of sustainability and self-reliance is another matter to ponder upon. It is very doubtful whether the teacher, as a first step, could become self- reliant. Even though it is a community-based programme, the community is not in a position to financially support the teacher. The teachers' income is mostly dependent on the support of PWDS, which in turn is dependent on overseas donor agencies. In case the flow of funds from foreign funding agencies is blocked, PWDS may not be able to extend the support hitherto rendered. What will happen to the existing preschool centres then? Will the community, having tasted the fruits of education, come forward to own the

> The teacher with too many irons in the fire, may not be able to ensure an effective preschool programme.

centre fully? It is possible and positive signs can be seen.

At the same time, if the centre becomes self-supporting and fully-owned by the community, does it not face the danger of being usurped by the power structure in the village, resulting in converting the centre into a commercial venture, levying monthly and special fees which cannot be afforded by the poor, thus indirectly restricting access for education to the children of the 'haves' only? Such privatisation might also lead to the appointment of regular teachers who believe in placing emphasis on children's uniform and other paraphernalia like shoes, socks, tie and uniform. The consequences would be the marginalisation of the poor children and the attention to the educational needs of the poor going back to zero. PWDS is not unaware of this possibility and is engaged in a debate on the kind of intervention and the stand to be taken when such problems arise.

Improving infrastructure

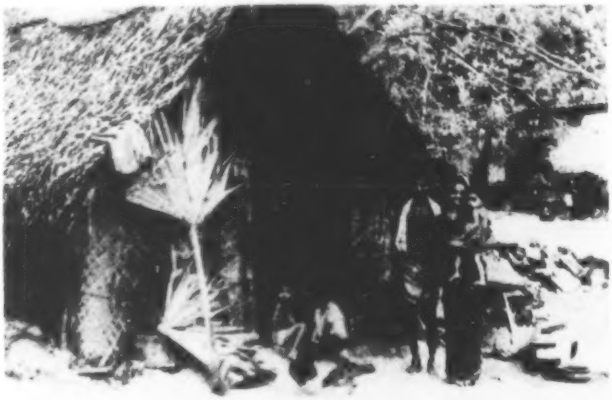
There is no denying the fact that working conditions are poor as far as the infrastructure is concerned. The need for more space, lack of toilet facilities, inadequate learning materials and inconvenient seating facilities are things that could be easily pointed out by any casual visitor. But considering that this programme is an outcome of community organisation and is partially supported by the rural poor, one can appreciate the need for the programme to fit into the existing ecology. Will the community be able to upgrade the infrastructure? This is yet another challenge.

Even though the community is very keen to contribute a place for the preschool, owing to its poor economic conditions, it is often difficult to find a suitable place free of cost for the school. PWDS pays a minimal rent to some schools. Community members could be motivated to either provide a place in the village for their own school, or to erect a temporary shed on public land using free labour and locally available resources.

New forms of support

The allowance given to the teachers by PWDS is very meagre in relation to the quantum of work they do. Though the teachers find the allowance useful,

> If the centre becomes self-supporting and fully-owned by the community, does it not face the danger of being usurped by the power structure in the village, restricting access for education to the children of the 'haves' only?



A tapper family

Sharing community space

based on the philosophy that something is better than nothing, yet in these hard times of spiralling prices and upward inflation, unless the Government, the community, the donor agencies and the voluntary agencies jointly do something to enhance the income of the teachers, it will amount to nothing short of exploitation.

To overcome this, PWDS is now thinking of creating an endowment for sustainability with a matching grant, the contributors being the community, and donors from the public. PWDS is also gearing up to join hands with other concerned voluntary agencies to pressurise the Government to provide preschool education to the children as their constitutional right.

Though some feeding centres were run during the first few years with the support of the food aid given by CASA, it had to stop as the scheme was closed. No food is provided at the centres at present. Some children bring food and some go home for lunch. A small-scale nutrition supplementation programme could be initiated, seeking financial assistance from Government nutrition programmes and other funding agencies.

Quality of education

The content and quality of early childhood education has to be revised after consulting educationists specialising in preschool education. At present, the teachers, not knowing what to do, tend to copy the system of English-medium education and imitate the traditional teaching methodologies. Earlier, the trainers for the teachers were themselves not specialists in the area, and the organisers were not aware of the importance of play-way methods in learner-centered education. Since PWDS did not see preschool education as a central task, not much thought was given to improve the content and quality of preschool education.

The training needs of the teachers have not adequately been fulfilled. Since they were involved in multiple roles, they had attended varieties of training programmes, but not enough on education. Due to lack of proper orientation and guidance, and as was the expectation of the parents too, they clung on to the age-old system of repetition, recitation and rote learning, that too in an alien tongue. This is totally irrelevant in their context as the children will enter into Tamil-medium primary schools after preschool education.

To overcome this, PWDS is now thinking of creating an endowment for sustainability with a matching grant, the contributors being the community, and donors from the public.

Topics for discussion in the monthly meetings were decided depending on the availability of local resource persons. Training programmes and workshops on concept clarifications on the content and quality of preschool education, the need for playway methods, preparation of educational aids and materials for activity-oriented learning are the dire need of the teachers today.

Since the teachers were involved in multiple roles, they had attended varieties of training programmes, but not enough on education.

The organisers began realising this need only recently, and conducted a five-day workshop last year, on early childhood education, for a group of 30 teachers representing various NGOs. Since then, efforts are on to modify and strengthen the existing curriculum, making it appropriate and contextual. PWDS has proposed to conduct several training programmes for the teachers during 1995-96, as it considers that spending for training is not an expenditure but a wise investment, since the quality of education is directly linked to training and supervision.

Teachers and parents

But more than the early childhood education training, the qualities of the child care workers are commendable. The love, sincerity, devotion and care of the teacher have created an indelible mark and lasting impression on the children. To them, the child care worker is a person with motherly qualities. The quality of the teacher has assumed even greater importance than the quality of the programme or the training. The success of the PWDS preschool programme, inspite of some of its limitations, can largely be attributed to the child care worker who embodies and personifies the spirit of dedication.

As the perception of the organisation changes towards shifting to a meaningful and relevant preschool education, a conflict is likely to arise between the perceptions of the community and that of the organisation. The expectations of the community are based on the kind of education system in vogue, however irrelevant, and parents are frequently unaware of the psychological damage caused to the children by such a system. It is for the organisation to create awareness and awakening in this regard through seminars, workshops and training programmes for the parents to carry them along with the new system.

The problem of child care cannot be solved by replicating traditional models of highly institutionalised creches and child care services fully subsidised by Government funds or by emphasis on 'professionalisation' of personnel with rigid requirements of formal institutional training, degrees and diplomas. It has to be tackled by encouragement and support extended to community-based attempts of the people and by providing support and guidance to the 'untrained.' The model developed by PWDS is worth studying as an innovative example. It has no claims to perfection, but illustrates a process of development that could well be an inspiration to others.

The problem of child care cannot be solved by replicating traditional models of highly institutionalised creches and child care services fully subsidised by Government funds or by emphasis on 'professionalisation' of personnel with rigid requirements of formal institutional training, degrees and diplomas

Appendix 1

PALMYRAH WORKERS' DEVELOPMENT SOCIETY

A community-based programme may be defined as one that is initiated, sustained and implemented with the participation of the community. The word itself connotes people's involvement and participation at every stage. The 191 palmyrah workers' *mantrams*, 124 Women's *Mantrams* and 106 Mother Groups and the emerging 20 self-help groups are the outcome of the enabling role of PWDS and the active participation of people in this attempt at development. Though this is a participatory process in which various changes have taken place at different stages, the process still continues but with new thrust and even greater participation of the people. After initial teething problems, the members of the PWDS mobilised resources, managed revolving funds, provided support for members in legal issues and identified beneficiaries among themselves for the housing and other schemes.

Current schemes

1. Community health - with emphasis on preventive measures
2. Habitat Resource Centre (HRC) - a movement which raises the quality of life and gives recognition and human dignity to the palmyrah workers
3. Team for Income Generation and Product Promotion Support (TIPS) - which enhances the income of palmyrah workers by providing support services
4. Centre for Rural Employment and Skill Training (CREST) - which creates participatory support systems like group enterprises and federation of groups to take care of skill training, resource mobilsation and marketing in an organised way
5. Family Counselling Centre (FCC) - which organises awareness programmes on rights of women and trains rural women to develop leadership qualities.
6. Self-help Groups - which encourage women to save and introduce revolving loan schemes and credit systems.
7. Development Association for Training and Technology Appropriation (DATA) - which offers professional support for community development programmes

Future concerns include :

- Strengthening the *mantrams* towards self-management by encouraging them to take up more responsibilities and minimising the direct role of the community workers

- Raising local resources and encouraging participation of the formal institutions to support the community-based organisations
- Motivating and initiating more self-help groups which are self-managed and self-sustainable
- Strengthening the women's movement by supporting their initiatives
- Dissemination of know-how in community-based income generation to other interested groups in Tamil Nadu
- Coordinating the development programmes of palmyrah workers by a network of voluntary development organisations with a package programme

As a result of PWDS intervention, the tapper community, over the years, has evolved into a strong, well-informed and self-confident force.

Appendix 2

DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE OF THE TEACHERS

	Percentages		Percentages
Age level		Years of experience	
21-25 years	11.60	0-3 years	6.00
26-30 years	13.90	4-6 years	19.70
31-35 years	26.90	7-9 years	33.60
36-40 years	18.60	10-12 years	10.50
41-45 years	19.70	13-15 years	18.60
45 and above	9.30	16-19 years	11.60
Educational qualification		Father's/Husband's occupation	
SSLC	68.20	Tapper	75.03
H.Sc.	27.10	Business	7.81
College	4.70	Clerk	4.68
Professional qualification		Conductor	3.12
Teaching	9.45	Driver	1.56
Tailoring	12.26	Farmer	4.68
Typewriting	15.09	Teacher	1.56
Printing	1.88	Govt. employee	1.56
None	61.32	No. of family members	
No. of in-service training programmes attended		1 - 3	37.60
		4 - 5	44.70
1 - 2	27.71	6 and above	17.70
3 - 5	59.04	Family income in Rs.	
Above 5	61.32	Below 300	15.29
Marital status		301-500	47.08
Single	26.75	501-750	11.76
Married	69.76	751-1000	14.11
Widow	3.50	Above 1000	11.76

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Appendix 3

ENROLMENT IN RECOGNISED SCHOOLS IN KANYAKUMARI DISTRICT

Year	Primary schools			Middle schools			High schools			Hr. Secondary schools		
	No.	Boys	Girls	No.	Boys	Girls	No.	Boys	Girls	No.	Boys	Girls
1981-82	353	63528	62166	123	42540	39807	81	26267	21173	68	47818	28972
1982-83	349	65987	69246	136	43535	40794	86	27793	22674	68	46589	28168
1983-84	347	58762	60272	142	50059	46309	97	36433	29421	68	44005	28896
1984-85	347	66153	66339	141	44539	40690	98	33325	27682	68	47125	31115
1985-86	346	55132	60176	142	37284	34446	95	29900	25965	71	46768	NA*
1986-87	346	55637	60326	142	37475	34676	95	37432	37400	71	49976	43195
1988-89	332	55075	54948	159	44669	40332	122	34901	37403	81	49943	48727
1989-90	326	62988	63349	160	NA	NA	100	NA	NA	200	NA	NA
1990-91	330	NA	NA	161	NA	NA	116	NA	NA	90	NA	NA
1991-92	325	65103	64889	156	42508	39476	139	36565	41644	98	55235	50585
1992-93	333	70390	69553	154	40217	36758	141	37052	42600	98	60129	54227
1993-94	330	75139	65051	158	44056	40210	144	40031	45082	93	67710	51339

*Note : figures for 1987-88 not available; * NA : Not available*

Source : District Statistical Handbook, issues for various years, Statistical Office, Nagercoil, Kanyakumari District.

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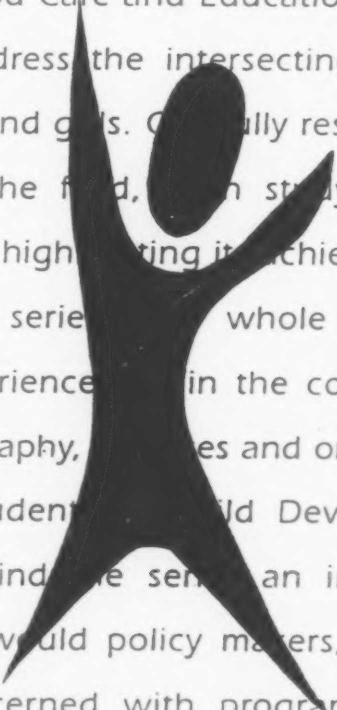
The SURAKSHA series documents innovative programmes of Early Childhood Care and Education in India, especially those which address the intersecting needs of women, young children and g[illegible]ls. C[illegible]lly researched and written by scholars in the f[illegible]d, [illegible]h st[illegible]y looks in depth at one programme, high[illegible]ting it[illegible]chievements, philosophy and goals. The serie[illegible] whole represents the rich diversity of experience [illegible] in the country, with a range in terms of geography, [illegible]es and organisational pattern. Scholars and student[illegible]ld Development and child welfare would find [illegible]e se[illegible] an invaluable source of information, as w[illegible]uld policy ma[illegible]ers, voluntary agencies and others concerned with progr[illegible]mming for women's and children's development.



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SURAKSHA

Early Childhood Care and Education in India

ANOTHER KIND OF CHILD CARE

Alternatives for Rural Women

Rajalakshmi Sriram

Mahila Samakhya, Gujarat

377

PS 024132

The SURAKSHA Series

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SURAKSHA

Early Childhood Care and Education in India

Volume 7

ANOTHER KIND OF CHILD CARE

Alternatives for Rural Women

by

Rajalakshmi Sriram

Monograph Series No. 7
M.S. Swaminathan Research Foundation
Madras

379

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FOREWORD

Every human being ultimately is the product of interaction between the genotype (inherent genetic make up) and the environment. While heredity determines potential, the home, health and educational environment determine whether young children bloom or remain "blossoms in the dust". There is a well-known saying - *as the twig is bent, so the branch will grow*. It is in this context that Early Childhood Care and Education assume critical significance with reference to giving the child an enabling environment for the full expression of his/her innate potential for physical and mental development.

I am happy that through the SURAKSHA series of publications, a careful chronicling of the many excellent examples of Early Childhood Care and Education in India is being undertaken. This series will enable scholars and researchers as well as policy makers and practitioners to learn from the rich diversity of experience available within our country in this field. Such an understanding is fundamental to learning from successes and thereby helping to replicate effective and economically viable models of day care.

This series has been lovingly put together and is the result of close cooperation among the many people who have worked hard on it. On behalf of the Foundation, I must particularly thank the members of the Advisory Committee, who have given unsparingly of their time and effort, the distinguished scholars who have written the case studies, the agencies whose work has been documented and the Aga Khan Foundation (India) for their support.

M·S· Swaminathan

M.S. Swaminathan

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- the reviewers, who have been a tremendous source of strength in maintaining quality but have of necessity to remain anonymous

and

- the many others, all of whom it is not possible to list, for their constant support which made this series possible.

* * *

EDITOR'S NOTE

The SURAKSHA series has grown from an idea which has been germinating for a long time. Scholars have long felt the need for documentation of Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) programmes in India. While there has been a wealth of experience in the country, with many small-scale experiments under the leadership of outstanding thinkers and educational leaders, it has been realised that hardly any of it has been recorded for a wider public.

The vast diversity in the situations of women and children in the country implies that child care services, especially day care, would vary widely in response to local and specific needs. At the same time, programmes for young children, by their very nature must be highly personalised, direct, small in scale, and rooted in local culture and relationships. Diversity and responsiveness to needs are hence an essential characteristic of successful programmes for young children. In the last two decades, with the rapid expansion of child care programmes like the Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) in the State sector, it has become all the more important to draw the attention of policy makers to the importance of the flexibility and responsiveness represented by these multiple approaches. Documentation has thus emerged as an essential tool for advocacy.

It was with the twin objectives of dissemination and advocacy that Project ACCESS embarked in 1993, with the support of the Aga Khan Foundation (India), on the project entitled **Multiple Approaches in ECCE in India**, with a view to bringing out a series of studies documenting innovative approaches to ECCE in India. Dr.T.S.Saraswati, Head, Department of Human Development and Family Studies, M.S. University of Baroda, who has for long been urging the need for such documentation, was an incomparable guide and adviser in launching the project. With the help of an Advisory Committee consisting of distinguished representatives from several disciplines, ranging from Child Development and Education to Management and Women's Studies, criteria were drawn up for

selection of programmes to be included in the series and procedures were developed for a participatory process of documentation.

The series of case-studies represents a wide range of experiences in terms of geography, auspices and structure. The locations range from the Himalayan region to the coastal South, from industrial metropolis to rural or tribal hamlets. The programmes are run by diverse institutions — voluntary agencies, trade unions, educational institutions and women's groups. The programmes include spontaneous private efforts as well as statutory obligations and government / non-government partnerships; they are employer-funded and union-sponsored, school-based or community based. The common element is a commitment to address the intersecting needs of women, young children and girls. In addition, each programme is need-based, client-oriented and responsive, a system of optimal size with a minimum life of three years, caters to lower socio-economic groups and is non-profit making in nature. The series title SURAKSHA was chosen for its rich resonance implying an all-embracing, nurturant care, visually represented in the logo; while the colour of each cover is intended to evoke the specific geographical context.

The process of developing the studies has been a participatory one, involving a researcher/writer working closely with the agency concerned, and providing opportunities for sharing and mutual learning among the agencies through a network and occasional meetings. The studies are process-oriented in nature and not merely descriptive, focussing both on the unique features and the replicable aspects of each programme, finances, sustainability, the child care worker, the organisational structure and relevant linkages. The concluding part in each case dwells on implications of the programme for wider policy initiatives for young children.

This study, the seventh in the series, proclaims in its very title the differentness of its approach, for it is not so much about child care as an activity in itself, as about its role in the empowerment of poor rural and tribal women in the villages of Gujarat. The narration, often in the women's own words, vividly evokes the steps in this process, constantly emphasising its dual nature. On the one hand, realising the handicaps they faced because of their multiple burdens, the women came together to organise ways to reduce those burdens by arranging child care; on the other hand, their ability to take and sustain such collective action itself reflects a degree of empowerment.

Does the reduced emphasis on the child indicate a lack of concern for the quality of child care? Are such conflicts between the interests of women and children inevitable and lasting or only temporary stages? How can they be overcome? These are some of the very basic issues raised by this unusual story.

Yet another set of issues relates to the meanings attached to words like decentralisation, sustainability, and self-reliance, in the context of poverty and multiple burdens. How far can these women go in running a child care service for themselves? What does "decision-making" imply without access to resources? How can help be offered which does not erode self-respect and pride in achievement?

What about the child caregiving function? Will it continue like this, the caregiver merely representing one of women's multiple roles on which she is temporarily focussing, or will she evolve into a paraprofessional with the skills for the job?

Empowerment is a process which is bound to raise such thorny questions, and be fraught with difficult choices and hard decisions. At the same time it opens up a fascinating vista of possibilities to which "another kind of child care" can lead.

October 1995

Mina Swaminathan
Series Editor

ANOTHER KIND OF CHILD CARE

ALTERNATIVES FOR RURAL WOMEN

ABOUT THIS VOLUME

The Author

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1 THE VISION

Mahila Samakhya (MS), which means Education for Women's Equality, is an innovative programme that is need-based, process-oriented and participatory by nature. It aims to give women an opportunity to learn, to grow, in every field, at every moment and in every situation, as a woman.

The programme, now six years old, stems from the National Policy of Education (NPE) which articulates the perception of education as a tool for empowerment and social justice (Appendix 1). Since most educational structures were perceived as being insensitive to women's needs, consultants, NGOs and activists in the field worked together towards developing an integrated programme for women's education.

The need

In a patriarchal structure, women are conditioned to accept their status as inferior. The resultant low self-esteem and stresses of survival incapacitate them to such an extent that they do not demand any of their rights and privileges. As a consequence, they are denied access to information, knowledge and skills. They need to be empowered to enable them to plan and act collectively for change.

Extensive discussions over several months led to an understanding of the critical issues such a programme of education and empowerment would have to address.

Mahila Samakhya is unique among State-sponsored projects. It has evolved over a long period of time, incorporating a range of view points, encompassing the experiences of a number of NGOs, women activists, educationists and bureaucrats. It recognises that change processes are not apolitical or value neutral. Salient non-negotiable principles provide its basic framework.

The non-negotiable principles

- The initial phase of the project, when women are coming together to form collectives and consolidate their independent time and space, must not be hurried or short-circuited.

- The pace, form and content of all activities must be determined by women and women's collectives at the village level who are participants in it, and women's priorities for learning must always be respected.

- All processes and activities within the programme must be based on respect for women's existing knowledge, experience and skills.

- Every component and activity within the project must create an environment for

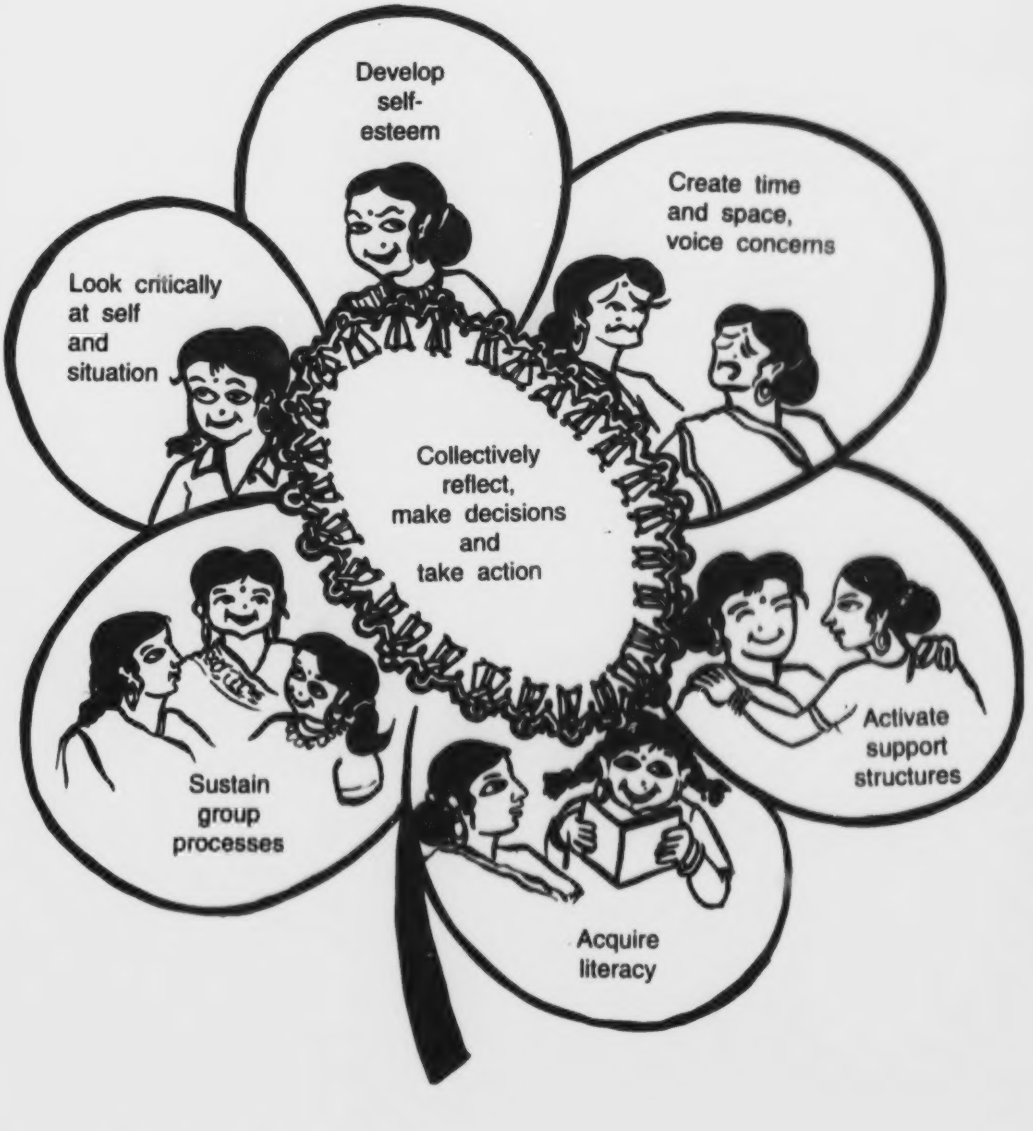
Develop self-esteem
Create time and space, voice concerns
Look critically at self and situation
Collectively reflect, make decisions and take action
Sustain group processes
Activate support structures
Acquire literacy

Fig.1 Goals and approaches of Mahila Samakhya

learning, help women to experience and affirm their strengths, create time and space for reflection, and respect individual uniqueness and variation.

- Planning, decision-making and evaluation processes as well as all levels of project personnel must always be accountable to the women's collectives at the village level.

- Project structures and personnel must play facilitative and supportive, rather than directive, roles.

The project has undergone refinement at several stages. Each revision has widened the scope and increased the flexibility of strategies, leading to further refinement of the definition of empowerment and delineation of the boundaries of the educational process. The focus is on enhancing women's self-image, fostering group action and cohesiveness in creating women-friendly infrastructures and policies, and in implementing a decentralised management structure. (Fig.1)

How does MS operationalise its philosophy ?

There were few models to draw on while setting up frameworks for implementation, though some form of organisation was stated in the document for setting up project structures which would create time and space for women's empowerment and would be accountable to the village women.

Based on a continuous communication system between the field workers and the supporting District Implementation Units, the programme operates with its roots in the *Mahila Sangha* (a women's collective). Earlier experiments showed that women at the village level need continuing and intensive support to help them reflect upon and analyse their lives. However informal they may be, the groups have to have some women taking up leadership roles. These are called *Sakhis* (friends). The Sakhi leads the mobilisation process in consultation with the *Sahayogini* (a person who walks arm in arm with one). Sahayoginis are the women who translate the facilitative and supportive mandate of the project at the grass-root level. Each Sahayogini assists about eight to ten Sanghas and generally lives in one of the villages of her group. The Sakhi receives a stipend of Rs 200 a month as compensation for loss of wages while involved in the mobilisation process. In some villages, the amount is deposited with the Sanghas.

The women who help in mobilisation receive training through the District Implementation Unit (DIU). Planning, organisation, administration, is done at the DIU level by the district resource persons and consultants, who are professionals facilitating and coordinating the activities and linking the grass roots to the State-level structure. The essence of the programme lies in its retention of the emphasis on processes to improve its quality and expand its geographical coverage. It rejects the target-oriented approach. Support to the structure (that sometimes seems too small to meet the expectations of thousands of women)

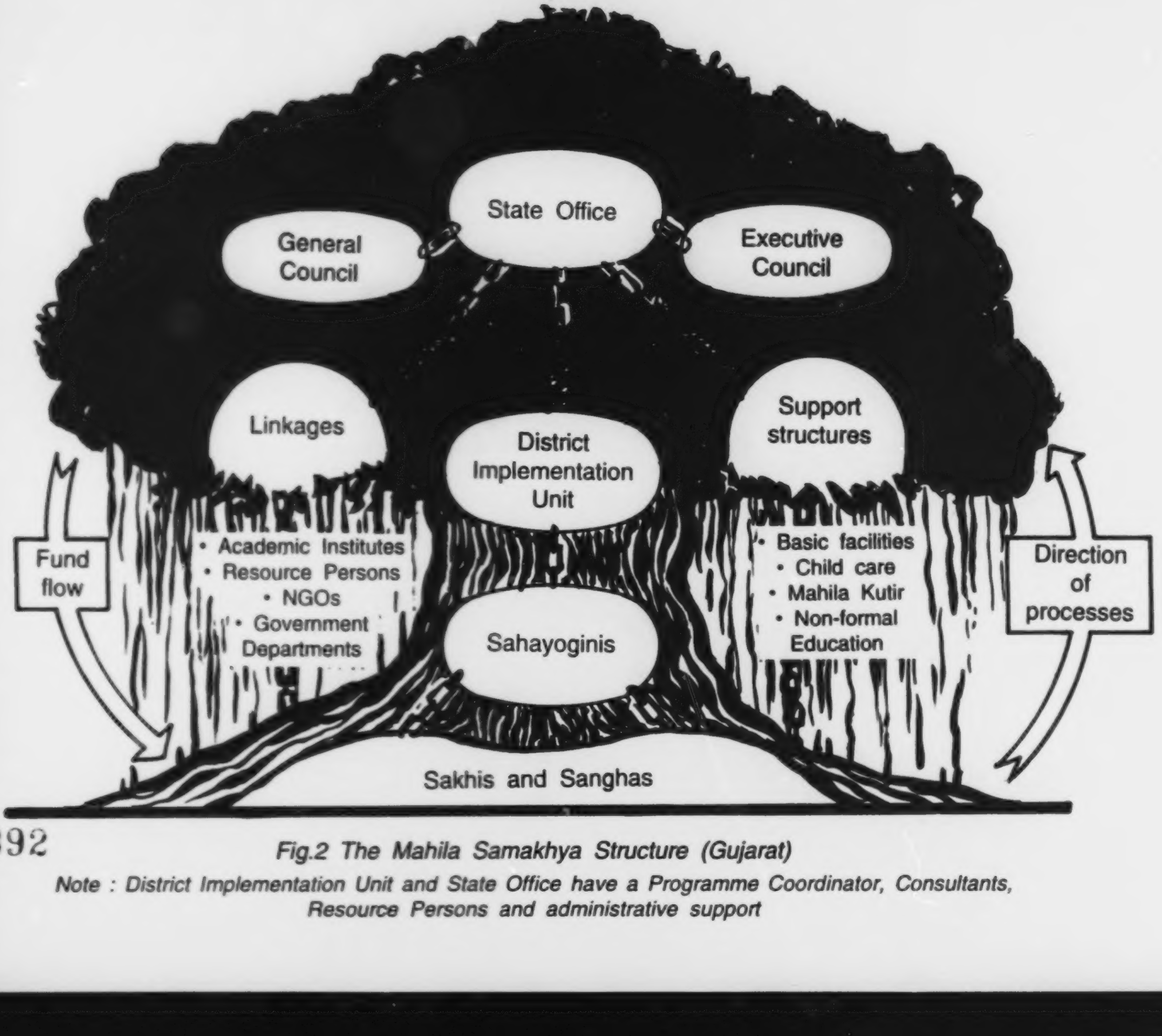
State Office
General Council
Executive Council
Linkages
District Implementation Unit
Support structures
• Academic Institutes
• Resource Persons
• NGOs
• Government Departments
• Basic facilities
• Child care
• Mahila Kutir
• Non-formal Education
Fund flow
Direction of processes
Sahayoginis
Sakhis and Sanghas

Fig.2 The Mahila Samakhya Structure (Gujarat)

Note : District Implementation Unit and State Office have a Programme Coordinator, Consultants, Resource Persons and administrative support emerges from networking with other NGOs, academic institutions, local resource persons and the District Resource Group (DRG). The General Council at the State level assists in formulation of guidelines. The Executive Committee, comprising representatives from within and outside the MS, assists and monitors programme direction, and deals with administrative and financial problems. Fig.2 shows the organisational structure with its built-in linkages, supports and feedback systems that truly attempt at decentralisation.

The programme now covers five States of India — Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Gujarat, Karnataka and Uttar Pradesh - with slightly varied operational structures. It runs with assistance from the Department of Education, Government of India. The concept is now being integrated into District Primary Education Projects in various States.

MS Gujarat, since its inception in April 1989, has spread to 221 villages in the four districts where it is now operational. The present document highlights the MS approach in general, and the experiences of Vadodara district in particular, in developing strategies for facilitating rural women in their attempt to create educational opportunities for themselves and substitute care for their children. It is the story of hundreds of women who, despite living in conditions of poverty, illiteracy, and oppression, have been able to alter their lives to some extent through collective solutions to their problems, one of which is inadequate child care facilities.

The focus here is on bringing the processes* to the forefront, beginning from the way child care is conceptualised. This is followed by a description of women's and children's lives in villages of Gujarat and the several steps involved in operationalisation of a flexible and decentralised model of child care. The foundation of this programme edifice are the functionaries; their selection and the innovative training processes they undergo is described in some detail. The status of child care programmes, their achievements and constraints, gives one an idea of the innate potential for growth and sustained development, and the long drawn out processes needed to make a commitment of this nature a reality in the field.

The essence of the programme lies in its retention of the emphasis on processes to improve its quality and expand its geographical coverage. It rejects the target-oriented approach.

The term process is used in two contexts. In the context of empowerment, it refers to a series of internal changes, while in the context of establishing and running child care centres, it refers to a series of actions.

2 THE CONTEXT

As the first group of Sahayoginis were trying to activate women in villages to mobilise groups around common issues, they found that lack of child care support was a matter of concern, and work overload a reason for women's inability to attend meetings of the Sangha or to organise themselves. In subsequent meetings of Sahayoginis a common theme began to emerge: Would addressing child care needs be a good starting point to win the trust of women and build a firm ground to initiate the formation of a group around an issue?

Beginnings

The ongoing discussions of a loosely structured DRG, comprising persons interested in supporting MS philosophy and goals, also focused on this. In about eight villages there was a strong demand for child care. Sahayoginis and resource persons keenly felt that they should respond to the needs. The functionaries supported the process in the field by helping the existing Sanghas make a list of children who required substitute care. Meetings were held to decide details such as choice of caregiver, time, place, etc. Funds were drawn from the available provision for setting up child care centres within the MS financial structures that cover cost of initiation of child care activities. In the 25% of the MS villages where funding for child care was available, centres were started, and the Sahayoginis played an active role in setting them up. Ad hoc training sessions were arranged.

The field study

"What direction should activities related to child care take in the field?" "Can Sahayoginis receive systematic training?" "Will the child care centres, which will need financial support, affect the overall MS goals and processes?" "Which NGOs should we link up with?" Such were the emerging questions in Sahayogini meetings and other district level discussions.

As answer to these was the initiation of a collaborative project between MS, Vadodara and the Department of Human Development and Family Studies (HDFS) and the Women and Household Development Research and Information Centre (WHOSDIC), both of the Maharaja Sayajirao University, Vadodara. This project aimed at the following:

- Systematic understanding of women's and children's lives in villages, and child care support that would effectively address the needs of the rural context.

- Evolving participatory, process-oriented training strategies for functionaries and village women, in order to facilitate field-level action and implementing them in a selected group
- Documenting of the above to facilitate replicability

The lives of rural women

Lakhi and Shanta are two women with children in the village Sripor Timbi. Lakhi's youngest son is six months old and she has another son aged three and a daughter aged six. Lakhi lives with her husband who is a labourer on a Patel's (*Zamindar*) farm. Shanta has two daughters, one aged five and the other aged two. She lives with her husband's parents and they have some land of their own.

Lakhi's day begins at 5:00 a.m., when her children are still asleep. She clears the beds, finishes her personal routines. She then gets ready to prepare the morning meal and lunch for her husband which he carries with him. Meanwhile, her little son needs to be breastfed and cleaned, and the older children attended to. As soon as her husband leaves, she feeds the older children, then gets on with the household chores of cleaning, washing the utensils and so on. She now gets ready to go to the pond for washing clothes and fetching water. She leaves the little one with her daughter and takes the three year old with her to the pond so that he can bring a small pot of water back with him. All the while she is worried that the little infant will get hungry or uncomfortable. She wonders how

Unending chores

she will cope with the long day and her multiple chores. She has to grind the flour, fetch fuel for the day and fetch water twice. The three year old has been running a fever and has not been attended to as she could not find time to go to the Public Health Centre (PHC) 3 km away. Her six year old, Champa, is unhappy at not going to school. Lakhi wishes that she could take up some labour at least during the peak season, to stretch the resources a bit better. But this year, since it was very difficult to find work at a nearby farm, she stayed home. Perhaps, when her baby is a little older and ready to walk, she would go to work.

Shanta's life is a little different. Since they have their own land, they have to make the best use of it and produce enough to carry them as far into the year as possible. Her mother-in-law cleans the cattle shed, feeds the animals and stays home till the cattle go for grazing around 9:30 - 10:00 a.m. Meanwhile, Shanta has to finish her personal routines, attend to her children, cook meals, fetch water and fuel and then go to the fields. She sometimes attends to these chores and goes out to work by forenoon. In case the farm work requires to be done in the morning, she attends to the household and children by noon. Her children either go to the fields with her (she often has to carry the two year old) or she leaves both her children outside, locks the house, and makes provision for food and water. She is always tense and anxious about how the children would manage in her absence. What if all the neighbours got busy, and the children went to the nearby stream to play? That would be so unsafe! What if they had insect bites, or the food was consumed by pets....then the children would remain hungry.

Lakhi and Shanta did not think that they could alter their lives in any way though they wanted to be more free. *We women are destined to live a life of drudgery and oppression,* – seemed to be their attitude. But MS members wanted to bring about changes in the lives of women like Lakhi and Shanta. Therefore, it was decided to study their situation carefully by conducting detailed interviews, accompanying them while they did their chores, discussing their activities, discussing in groups on specific issues and talking to the family members who supported them.

Following are details of the number of villages and persons studied to understand the lives of women, girls and young children better.

Table 1 **Universe and sample for study**

No. of villages covered:	9
Total population	4176
Total households	742
Persons interviewed :	
Mothers	148
Caregivers	40
Fathers	24
Girls aged 6 to 16 yrs	115
Child care pattern studied :	
Children	285

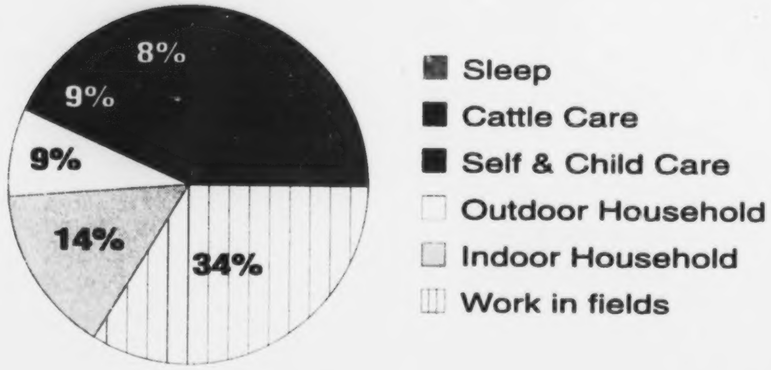

Fig.3 How rural women's time is spent

It was estimated that most of the women like Lakhi, Shanta, and others had a 16 to 18 hours' schedule per day (Fig.3). This led to a lot of physical stress, affecting their health and overall well-being. Many with small children did not have the option that Lakhi had to stay home. So they left their children with others or took them along to work. 30% of children under the age of one were cared for by their mothers while working in the fields, but only 18% of children above one were taken along. They often worried about being abused by the employer for inefficiency, and about exposing the children to severe weather conditions and other health hazards.

Women like Lakhi and Shanta with children under six years ranged from 10 - 50% of the population in different villages. All of them expressed a desire for child care when they were specifically asked the question during discussions. Most could not imagine such a safe arrangement was possible.

How do young girls fare ?

Pramila and Leela are 12 year old girls. They had to drop out of school after class IV as they started assisting their mothers in household work and caring for their younger siblings. Leela's elder sister went to earn with her mother. (Appendix 2)

Leela did not have many opportunities to play or learn. Could she go out like her brothers did? She could hardly express her desire to go to school as the family and community would not hear her voice or the voice of other girls like her. As a result, girls like her did not think much of their abilities that were nipped in the bud. They, like their mothers, would get married and have children and continue to be labourers as they did not have the training for other jobs. But Leela and Pramila did dream of the remote possibility that marriage could probably alter their situation, depending on the kind of spouse and his family. Can girls like Leela and Pramila be brought out of their oppressive life cycle ?

Out of 9 villages studied, five were like Timbi or Deri with no child care facilities. In others that had an anganwadi of the Integrated Child Development Scheme (ICDS), children who attended ranged from 25% to 50% of the total. Some did not attend because it was too far, and others because the timing was not suitable to their mother's work schedule. Sometimes parents felt that if they took their children along to the farm, they could share the meal provided for them by their employers. Some others felt that the anganwadi was after all a government programme with no interest in the family's welfare.

About 25% of young children were cared for by their siblings either at home or in the fields. 16% of these young caregivers were themselves less than six years of age, and hence deprived of opportunities for their own childhood and education (Fig.4).

CHILD was the psychological centrality of the mother's life but as Shanta and Lakhi said – *Their option was*

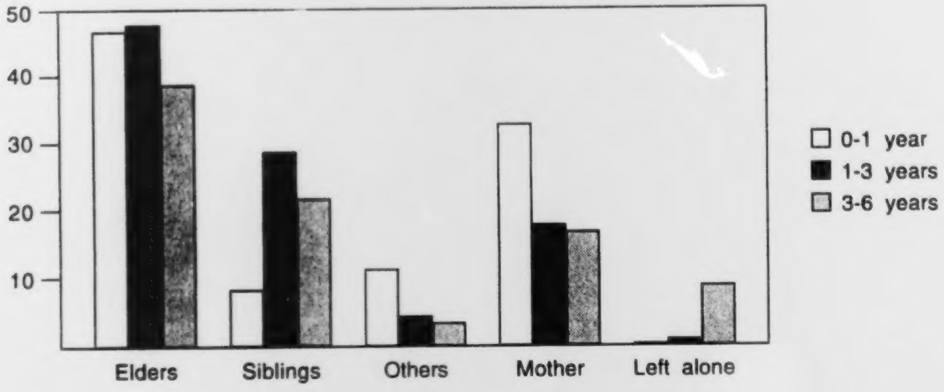

Fig.4 Who takes care of the children?

Note : Percentages for each age group add up to 100.

Minding the baby

to either earn to feed the child or care for the child. (Appendix 3) For most of them child care was a concurrent activity except during breastfeeding (sometimes they even cook or cut vegetables or clean grains while they breastfeed) and thus they had little time to play or relax with the child. The child's constant pestering and need for attention often led to scolding or beating.

Could the course of their children's lives be changed in some way by at least providing a clean and safe shelter? Is adequate care not the basic right of children? Can mothers and children be motivated to make use of existing facilities? Should child care and development be left to chance? To achieve the goal of literacy and overall development, non-formal educational facilities combined with other responsibilities including child care are necessary. These need to be set up and supported to help village women alter their own and their children's situation in some way.

3 CHILD CARE SUPPORT

Enabling suitable arrangements for substitute care of children is intrinsically linked to women's development and empowerment processes. This as a concept is beginning to be articulated more clearly in many academic and activist forums. In order to achieve the goal of empowerment, MS addresses itself to the provision of necessary support structures, and creation of effective and viable alternatives for substitute care of children has been one of them. The primary goal of child care in MS is to release the woman of one of her multiple burdens and support her empowerment in direct and indirect ways. (Fig.5)

Empowering women through initiation of child care centres requires tremendous inputs in the preparatory phase and strong support to the collectives for initiating action in their own villages. This crucial task generally comprises several stages and ongoing processes, spread over a time period of one to two years, depending on the nature and dynamics of each village situation.

Preliminary steps

The facilitators (Sahayoginis and Sakhis), in their village visits, explore, discuss, observe and analyse women's problems. Child care does not emerge as an immediate issue. Because of their awareness, facilitators may either initiate a dialogue on child care or the village women may themselves do so. However, at this juncture, efforts are made to clearly understand the child care needs of the community.

Some villages have ICDS and others do not. The Sangha's action is determined by women's needs and interests. They may decide to get ICDS to their village to address health and educational needs or may alternately decide to initiate a day care centre. A crucial task for the group at this stage is to evolve a model of the support system that will address their multiple needs.

In the initial phase of MS, detailed discussions and consultations at the DIU level with Sahayoginis focused on evolving a model to suit the village conditions with inbuilt flexibility in form and organisation. A summary picture of each village was put forth through simulated activities. The participants shared their ideas about creating a model support system. The various options that emerged were:

- Self-financed child care centres, combining day care and preschool activities
- Linking the day care service to the existing anganwadi of ICDS

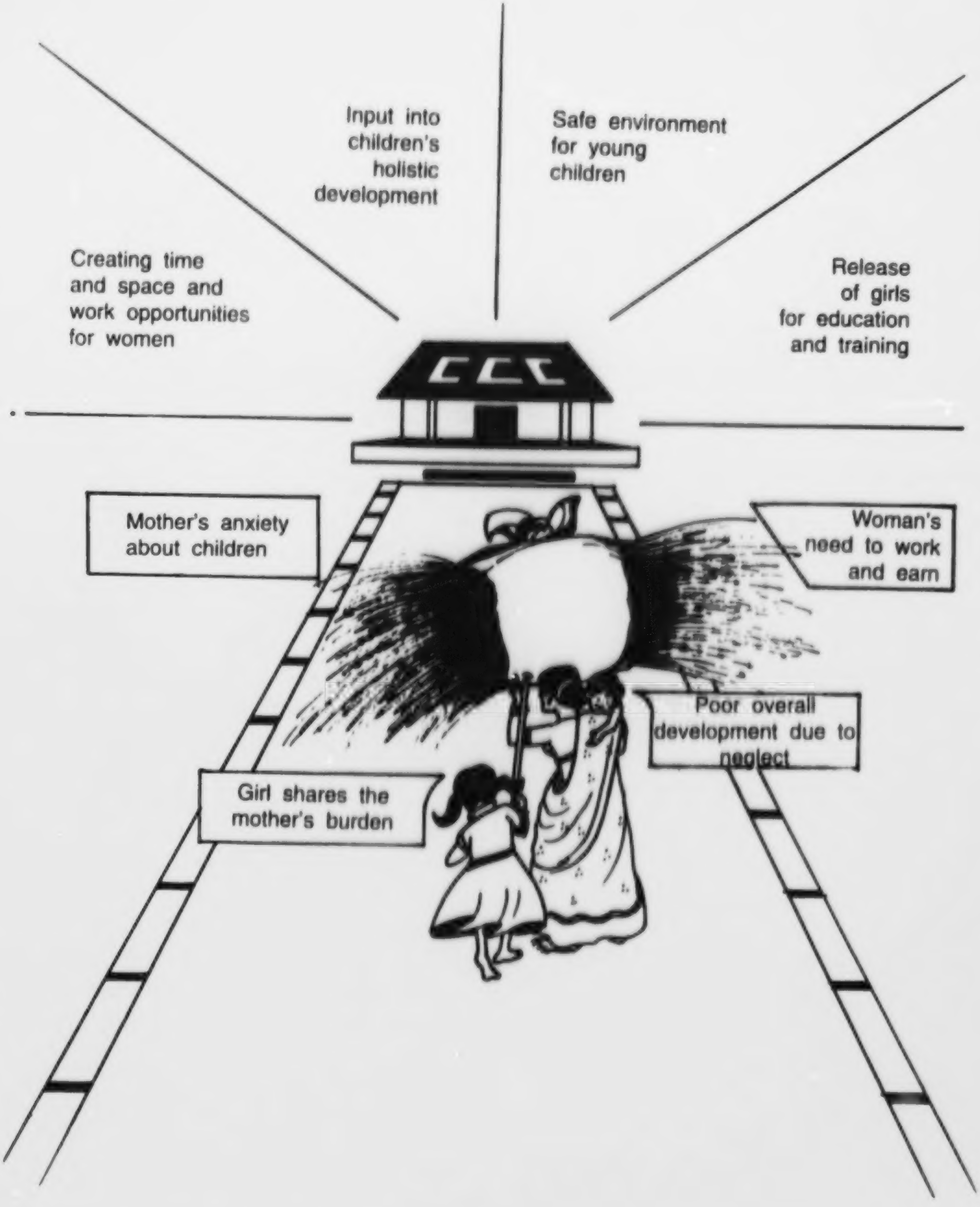
Input into children's holistic development
Safe environment for young children
Creating time and space and work opportunities for women
Release of girls for education and training
CCC
Mother's anxiety about children
Woman's need to work and earn
Poor overall development due to neglect
Girl shares the mother's burden

Fig.5 Child care : a road to women's empowerment

- Child care centres only for a section of the population in the village (the poorest) where the demand is high

- Caring for children in more than one location

What then are the differences between existing child care facilities and the one MS wishes to support? Multiple responses emerged to this question, leading to the following conclusions that served as a framework for building the support system:

- Leadership and responsibility for child care centres rest with the Sangha. With community participation in setting up, continued implementation and monitoring is expected.

- Flexibility is needed in

  – timings to suit the needs of the community, especially mothers, as well as the workers' duties and responsibilities

  – programme evolved with regard to the need for care and/or education

  – choice of child care worker from the same community, preferably of the same caste, and chosen by the Sangha

  – promoting varied models and catering to a wide age group

  – including infants, preschoolers and older children if need be

- Sanghas negotiate for resources at the local levels and with MS. MS Vadodara arranges for disbursement of funds to Sanghas gradually, based on specific criteria collectively evolved for assessing their readiness for effectively using the funds. This process may take anything from three to twelve months.

Preparation of facilitators

In their training sessions and meetings, the facilitators (Sahayoginis) discuss the steps involved in translating the philosophy into reality by women's collectives. They go through the experiences themselves, through a series of field and simulated activities, to analyse and understand women's needs, decision-making processes, group dynamics, and their own strengths and biases. The facilitators receive strong support from the resource persons/consultants. The group lists anticipated problems and possible solutions. Further support is provided through regular field visits by District Resource Persons.

At the village level

Since MS, by its ideology, responds to women's voices, and works with women at their own pace, there has been a variation in the nature and sequence of activities undertaken by each Sangha to reach the goal of starting a child care support facility. (Fig.6) Despite differences across villages, the essential steps emerge as:

1. Creating awareness about women's situation in society, women's work, their multiple roles and associated stress

2. Formulation or activation of the Sangha to work towards the task of setting up a child care support system

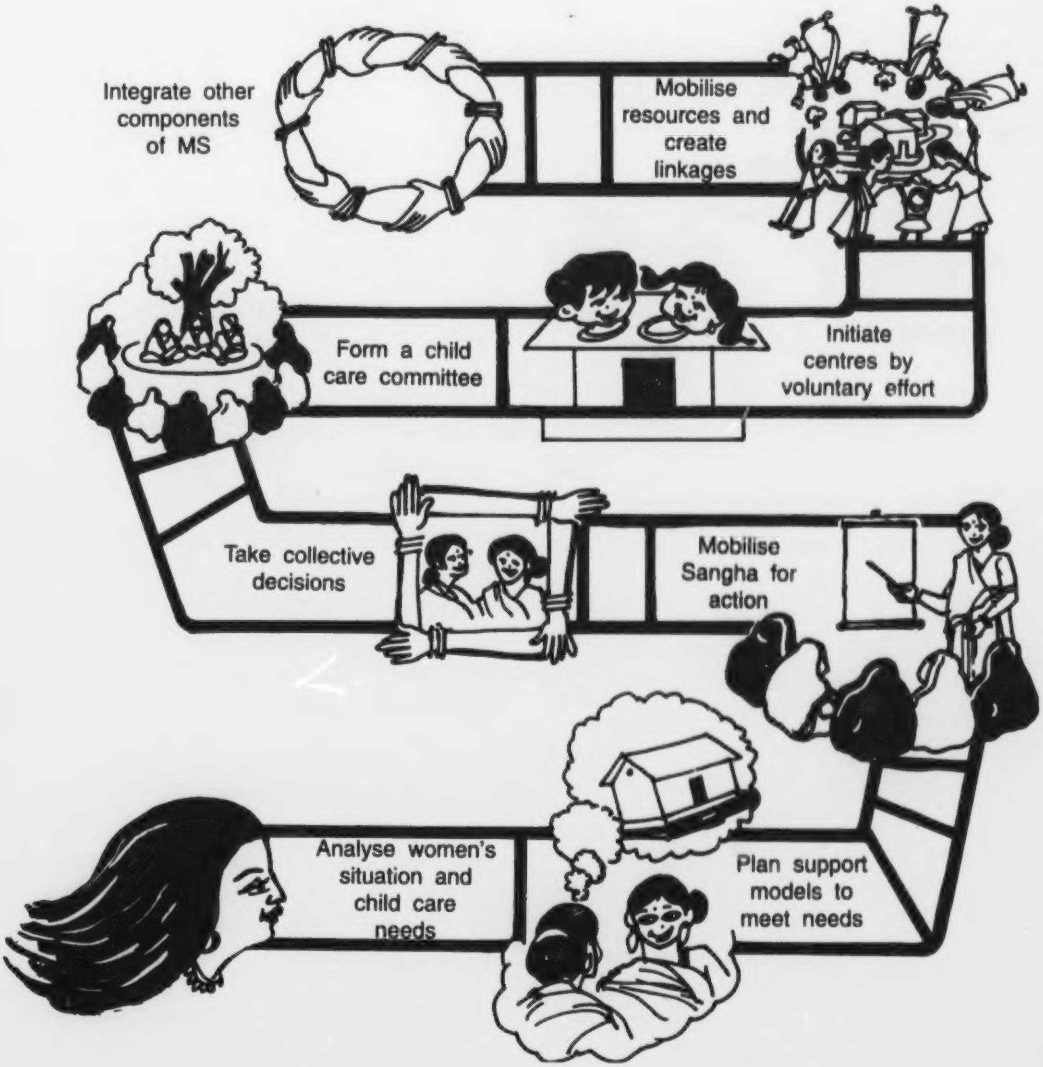
Integrate other components of MS
Mobilise resources and create linkages
Form a child care committee
Initiate centres by voluntary effort
Take collective decisions
Mobilise Sangha for action
Analyse women's situation and child care needs
Plan support models to meet needs

Fig.6 Evolving the child care support system

3. Collective decisions about details related to the type of child care support that needs to be created and formation of child care committees

4. Collective decisions about choice of place, time, caregiver (who, how many, why) and payments

5. Discussions, decision-making and follow-up activities for resource mobilisation at local and district level

6. Preparation and actual initiation of the child care centre

7. Gradual stabilisation of the programme, and working towards long term goals

Self-awareness and Sangha formation

Mobilisation at the village level is facilitated by the Sahayoginis and Sakhis and other women who assume leadership roles. They translate their training to the field through a series of meetings, home visits and discussions. Various methods like role playing, films or drawings are used for communication. Sometimes, it is done by arranging cluster meetings for a selected set of members from a group who then assume leadership at the village level. They become the local level child care committee, both from the point of special training inputs or as an avenue for maintaining active contact with village women. The decisions about the committee's composition, the number of members and the criteria for their selection are taken at the Sangha level. Roles, responsibilities and rules are evolved by collective decisions of the group. A committee, for example, can consist of:

- a senior member whose voice will be respected and heard in the group
- representatives from mothers and caregivers, the number depending on the size of the group
- anganwadi worker or any other functionary delivering a service, to ensure good co-ordination in setting up the child care centre
- Sahayoginis and Sakhis (old and new) who would automatically be members

The committee then assumes the major responsibility of setting up the child care centre and ensuring its proper utilisation. It makes decisions about matters pertaining to child care services such as the performance of Balsakhis (child caregivers), maintenance of accounts, utilisation of funds, etc., and plays the day-to-day managerial role. What is noteworthy is the fact that the committee in no way undermines the status or decisions of the Sangha.

Common discussion through formal or informal meetings with mothers, caregivers and, in many cases, fathers of young children, helps in obtaining consent for participation from their families in an indirect way.

The focus of discussion within the Sangha is in mobilising resources within the community, as a means of minimising dependence on external resources. The advantages of community participation are highlighted in terms of having the right and authority over the design and management of the child care centre (facility started by the group will belong to the group). The minimum resources required for starting a child care facility are the premises, some provision for snacks (*nasta*), and payment for the caregivers.

Finding a place

Several possibilities for the location of the child care facility, such as individual homes, fields, or a common public place (e.g., temple or school premises or Panchayat house) are discussed. It is often found that there is difficulty in finding a large enough space to house 25 to 30 children as the houses are generally small, and the school is far off, etc. The general consideration is to choose a place which is accessible to all children (especially the lower caste), with some outdoor space for play, indoor space for seating and safety (not on the road where too many animals or vehicles would be constantly moving). Many villages decide to initiate the centre in the Balsakhi's house, mainly for convenience. However, this as a general practice is discouraged by the Sangha. The women feel that the Balsakhi would pay greater attention to her household work instead of spending time with children or misuse the resources, especially food. The place has been changed in 15% of the villages, in view of the Sangha's mistrust or need for exercising greater control over the centre.

> What is noteworthy is the fact that the committee in no way undermines the status or decisions of the Sangha.

For obtaining the premises, the Sangha leaders and Sahayoginis negotiate with the Sarpanch; they have to clarify many issues like timings, nature of use, maintenance and safety. The building often requires repair or reorganisation, and the Sangha has to then co-ordinate local resources (both human and material). They contact brick makers, carpenters, and masons who are available in the village. Sometimes the Sarpanch acts difficult and refuses to give permission to use the premises. The Sanghas then contact the Taluka Development Officer (TDO) and renegotiate at the village level, including the Sarpanch, for obtaining consent.

Continuous efforts are made by the Sanghas for establishing their rights over public places. The activities related to the establishment of *Mahila Kutirs* (places that belong to Sangha women) are automatically linked to the child care issue. Due to this sort of liaisoning, the group is exposed to a variety of experiences that enhances its learning, improves confidence and reinforces ability and potential.

Resources for supplementary nutrition

One of the major issues is related to the supply of supplementary nutrition (*nasta*). There is a fear among all Sanghas that if this is introduced unconditionally, the centres would become just *nasta kendras* (feeding centres) and the caregivers would have little time for anything else. Also, the provision from available grants is considered highly inadequate.

After sufficient discussions at DIUs and with women, Sangha members and Sahayoginis have felt that the need for nasta should be evaluated depending on the timings of the centre. In a few villages with anganwadis, it was decided that one snack could be provided for at the child care centre. In other cases, children should either bring their own food or go home for lunch. Nasta is also viewed as a major means of attracting children to the centre in the initial stages. However, Sanghas make constant efforts to reinforce the need for a good programme for attracting children.

The Sangha members participate in the purchase of raw materials (50% of the villages), maintenance of accounts (50-70% of the villages) and cooking of meals in rotation (20% of the villages). Community contributions in varied forms are mobilised. Members contribute firewood, or assist in collecting water, add their own bit in the form of vegetables, jaggery and such things to enhance the quality of food. In most villages the children attending the centre are provided meals as "good will" on special events such as marriages, celebrations or even as part of ceremonies after death. Problems are inevitable in such a decentralised process. Every problem event is viewed as a new learning opportunity to bring issues to the forefront.

Every problem event is viewed as a new learning opportunity to bring issues to the forefront.

Initiating and stabilising the programme

Most village Sanghas initiate the centre with some ceremony, as a good omen, and also for publicity to catch the attention of mothers and other key persons. The first eight centres of MS were started in February 1991. Initially, some Sanghas decided to have the centre open for about 4 to 5 hours. However, this varies greatly with the seasons. Children, mothers and Balsakhis take time to adjust to their new routines. As Balsakhis Savita and Champa say:

> *We have crying babies, toddlers and young children who run around demanding food and toys. But we are not very sure as to how to go about engaging children pleasantly, taking care of their disciplinary problems. Further, we do not know whether we should fetch the children, or mothers will drop and pick up their children.*

Finding answers through Sangha and cluster meetings, the women decided that mothers should drop and pick up their children. Balsakhis like Savita and Champa know that they will receive adequate training to help them in their job through the District Implementation Unit.

Sanghas have evolved their own guidelines for the programme. Initially they may use different means to attract children, for example, serving a sweet snack, but soon enough, these practices are discouraged before they become a habit.

Funding the centres

The source of resources to keep the centre going is the central theme for discussion in the Sangha. Women get to know about the earmarked funding available through MS for child care activities. The Sangha can avail of the following amounts to meet recurring expenditure:

Table 2 **Recurring expenditure**

	Rs./month
Balsakhi's honorarium	500
Supplementary nutrition	423
Contingencies	40
Total	963

In addition, there is budget provision for Rs. 1800 per year for doctors' visits and medicines (which is not availed of, as the Sanghas have built strong links with PHCs), and Rs. 4000 for non-recurring equipment which is released in stages by MS as and when needed. Provision for training (Rs. 4200 per year) is handled by MS.

The women brainstorm to explore alternative local resources from the community in the form of play materials, fuel, water, floor spreads, *matkas*, grains and so on. Community contributions (a nominal amount of Rs. 5-10 per child) are collected to meet the cost towards an honorarium for the Balsakhi. In the village Haripura (Racha) women have convinced the shopkeeper to supply raw materials on credit, which can be paid off during times when work is available.

There is much discussion and excitement when the Sanghas make an application, with the support of a literate person, for financial assistance towards payment of the Balsakhi's honorarium or snacks and contingent expenses. Now begins the arduous task of follow-up which is often very frustrating.

How are funds transferred to the Sanghas ? Mamta & Smita (resource person and consultant) claim:

We (facilitators) play a major role to see if the Sanghas are ready for managing the finances. We check whether the Sanghas take the responsibility to organise and understand child care as a component within Mahila Samakhya and as a collective activity leading to empowerment. We also check to what extent mothers of young children have been involved in designing of the child care support.

As time has gone by, Sanghas and child care committees have taken over this task of monitoring the processes and assessing readiness based on detailed criteria, which they themselves have evolved. The following are checked:

- Functional presence of a centre
- Fairly regular attendance of children

- Extent to which nutritional needs of the children are met

- Sangha initiatives in problem solving.

The DRPs, Sahayoginis and Sangha members make independent observations and collectively discuss them in monthly meetings for final decisions.

The two interlinked roles of MS, as the mobiliser of, and channel for, funds, often become contradictory. The need to pay at least minimum wages to Balsakhis is recognised, but it is not feasible in the present financial structure. Child care centres do need more resources. Changes in policy and alteration of the financial structure have been very difficult. To lobby and liaison effectively and creatively at all levels is a matter of continuous concern.

Ongoing monitoring and training

Even as the centre's routine is gradually stabilising, the Sangha starts its work to liaison with other programmes like the anganwadi (ICDS), the primary health care centre and the school. Renuka (a Sahayogini) says:

> *We need to have meetings and discussions frequently to sort out emerging issues.*

Where women sort out problems

- Sangha meeting – frequent at the village level, as the need may be

- Cluster meeting – once in two to three months, comprising village level child care committees

- Sahayogini meeting – once a month along with DRPs at the DIU

- Tours, visits and celebrations – planned in a phased manner, to enhance learning by observation and participation

Strong communication links between the village women and the implementation structures maintained through these multiple channels are what offer the programme its uniqueness.

The primary goal of child care in MS is to release the woman of one of her multiple burdens and support her empowerment in direct and indirect ways.

4 WOMANPOWER

The MS ideology prioritises the "process" as significant, which has led to a methodology that ensures the locus of decision making at grass-root level. Accountability stemming from the programme ideology flows down from the State and the district offices through Sahayoginis and Sakhis to women's collectives at the village level.

How are Sahayoginis selected ?

The Sahayoginis, Sakhis and Balsakhis play pivotal roles in the programme and hence their selection has been of vital concern. The criteria and procedures for selection of Sahayoginis (the major link between DIU and Sanghas) have been collectively evolved by mutual consultative workshops between MS resource persons, members of NGOs active in organising women, academic institutions and personnel involved in training. The potential applicants are invited to a common forum to participate in varied activities which give scope for self-expression and assessment of sensitivity and concern towards social issues. Drawing and dialogue often facilitate group discussion. There may also be a story completion or essays on the happiest or saddest moments in life. Such activities serve as a means to understand the implicit and explicit potential in an individual. These are followed by interviews to understand the background and commitment of the person to this important work that brings her an honorarium.

Table 3 **Reasons for becoming Sahayogini**

Commitment to women's issues	40%
Economic gains	86%
Scope for independence in decision-making	84%
Personal satisfaction and new learning	80%
Improve liaison-making abilities	26%

** Percentages total to more than 100 because of multiple responses*

How are Sakhis selected ?

The responsibility of Sakhi and Balsakhi selection rests with the Sangha. MS Gujarat has adopted the strategy of Sakhi rotation. Two to four women every year play the roles of catalysts in the mobilisation process. In Gujarat, the Sakhi is seen as a learner who shares her training, new skills and awareness with other women. Her honorarium is viewed as a stipend and not a salary. There is a tendency for older women to go out as Sakhis in the initial stages. Probably it is their way of checking the authenticity of MS. Almost all the Sakhis have never left their villages before. Sharing the excitement of travel and new experiences and the visible confidence motivates other women to take on the role of Sakhis. As the number of trained women increases over the years, the newer ones are even more enthusiastic with the active support of the groups in their villages.

Sanghas change a Sakhi if they feel she is irresponsible, does not participate in training, or share her learning with other women or has personal limitations.

Selection of Balsakhis

Balsakhis are chosen on a more permanent basis, and not on rotation. Based on the type of support and number of children, the Sakhis and community are encouraged to voice their own perceptions about the number of children one Balsakhi could care for. Most women generally feel that one person can care for about 10 children in a mixed group of infants and pre-schoolers, and 15 children if only preschoolers and older children. In some villages, women feel that more Balsakhis would be required in view of the large number of children. However, they are not sure as to how many children will attend the centre every day. As a result, they start with two persons. In a few villages the groups choose three persons. In some instances, women volunteer their services.

The criteria for Balsakhis' selection is as follows :

- person from within the village
- her willingness and availability
- not too many family responsibilities
- consent of her family
- age of her own children
- her personal traits such as loving, caring and tolerance
- acceptability to the group

Each group tries to have at least one literate worker though this is not always feasible. The choice emerges to be an unmarried girl, a mother of young children, or an old caregiver.

Table 4 **Reasons for becoming Balsakhi**

Steady income, better than farm work	**6%**
Satisfaction from work	**40%**
Interest in children and women	**63%**
Learning to solve problems	**43%**
Prestige in society	**10%**

** Percentages total to more than 100 because of multiple responses*

The honorarium to Balsakhis is an important issue for discussion. It is dependent on timings, number of days of attendance, responsibilities, the market rates for labour, etc.

From Sakhi to Sahayogini

Generally, the market rate for labour during peak seasons is much higher than the funding available. In some villages labourers are paid Rs. 25 to 30 per day during peak seasons whereas in child care centres it is not possible to pay more than Rs. 10 a day. This creates some difficulty in terms of availability. The Sahayoginis or group leaders have to convince the concerned persons by explaining factors such as stability of income, the social value of the job, the scope for new learning, individual development and so on. The group believes that it should work towards at least paying minimum wages, and collective efforts to seek more resources are ongoing.

In the initial years, there were cases where the Sakhis became Balsakhis. Sahayoginis and Sangha members felt that such a trend leads to centralisation of power with one person, as she is the one who avails all opportunities of training, may not share with others, and, moreover, the Sangha's control over the centre would become weak. The Balsakhis have been changed once in 30% of the centres and twice in 20% of the centres. The major reasons for change is either personal problems or irresponsibility in caring for children. This has had implications such as change in location of the centre, inadequate training, and management problems. At a point in time, there was a decision not to choose any ex-Sakhis as Balsakhis.

The selection of the Balsakhi (based on caste, position, training and education)

Table 5 **Demographic profile of Sahayoginis and Balsakhis**

	Total	
	Total MSG	Vadodara
Sahayoginis	58	31
Sakhis	1234	493
Balsakhis	> 106	56

Sahayoginis	**Balsakhis**
– 42% are in the age range 25-29 years, 26% are in the 30-34 years group, 19% are less than 24 years and only 13% are more than 35 years old	– 45% are in the age range of 20-30 years, 15% are girls below 20 yrs., 30% are 30-40 yrs and 10% above 40 years
– 70 % are married and 50% live in nuclear households	– 65% live in joint families
– 75% of them and 53% of their husbands have secondary school education whereas 26% are college educated	– 50% have primary school education and about 25% are illiterate, with about 10% in rural areas having studied up to the secondary level
– 40% of their husbands are in service and 30% are agricultural labourers	– 62% of the families are agriculturists, either small farmers or hired labourers; 17% in rural areas are in other forms of paid employment
– 45% have children under 6 years and the rest above 6 years, and all children of school age are currently enrolled in schools.	– 45% of Balsakhis have children under six and the rest above six years
– Their family income range is Rs. 800-3000 per month	– Most are from the same socio-economic group as the other families in the villages

continues to be a concern, in view of changing dynamics within MS and at the village level. The Sangha plays a major role in this process. Sorting out issues involves tremendous inputs into processes, and building trust within the group and community.

54% of Balsakhis' families offered them strong moral support and helped them in their household tasks (32%). About 14% of Balsakhis received help from their own families in running the centre.

Talking about their problems with Balsakhis, the women said :

– Balsakhi was irresponsible and left the children when their mothers were not at home.

– After 3 years of work, both Balsakhis were irregular for about three months. The Sangha was divided into two, one for and the other against the Balsakhi, leading to quarrels between two families.

– Since the centre was running in a reputed family of the village and the Balsakhi belonged to that family, she paid attention to housework and neglected the children.

– Balsakhi used to come to the centre under the influence of alcohol.

Sorting out the problems required courage. In Timbi village, men were not allowed to interfere. First, warnings were given and irresponsibilities pointed out. Meetings were held continuously for 10-12 days as it was very difficult to take other women in the old Balsakhi's place (it's a small sector, and all 35 households have there own interactional dynamics). This problem was solved by choosing young girls as Balsakhis.

In other villages it was more difficult. In one village, several meetings were called, but the Balsakhi would not turn up to answer the queries. So she could neither be retained nor changed. To solve this took a long time and affected Sangha processes.

DRPs facilitated meetings of the Sanghas or clusters with the support of the Taluka level child care committees. Women got together and analysed the Balsakhi's responsibilities. They were helped to look into the depths of the issue, the political, societal and family dynamics as they emerged. Sometimes Sangha women visited a nearby village to understand a similar situation there.

Based on the new experience and awareness, a collective decision emerged. The Sangha draws to the Balsakhi's attention the need for changing her behaviour. If she still has some problems, she gives up her place to someone else identified by the Sangha. Though the process of bringing about internal changes is fraught with problems and personal dissatisfaction, women feel that it is the best way to learn and improve one's own self-confidence.

For example, a Sahayogini may feel that she has to start a centre because her image is at stake. The Balsakhi feels that everyone should listen to her, so she exercises her power over the Sangha. It is a challenging task for the group to break these little power structures that develop at various stages in the ongoing processes. Intervention can either bring positive results or lead to negative repercussions wherein group trust and solidarity break down. Rebuilding the same requires much effort. It is a difficult and time-consuming task to help the Sanghas learn the process of disaggregating the causal factors at individual, family and group level. It is hard for women in these small homogeneous clusters to draw boundaries between group work and family matters. In a few instances, the Sanghas almost broke up and centres closed down for short periods of time. There can be threats to women's safety too. Sorting out problems collectively rebuilds a stronger Sangha with renewed vigour.

Sahayoginis talk about finding solutions

Initially we were so worried about the breaking up of the Sangha. We also noticed that in many cases small power structures were emerging. It may be the Balsakhi, or the Sakhi. We thought that the Sangha should understand the difference between the MS approach and just running a child care centre. So we decided to bring it out in the open. We now have subtle indicators to know if decisions are a collective process or not. For example, women know if they are consulted for fixing the time for a meeting, or about the food, or introducing a new activity or if the decisions are made individually. We also noticed that in some villages the Sangha leaders belonged to the same family as the Balsakhis. Therefore, the problems were aggravated. The Sangha understood that we have to delink personal issues in the interest of the larger issues of women.

The problems are temporary. In one village, the former Balsakhi was not allowing children to come to the centre. In another village, husbands restricted some women from attending meetings. But such misunderstandings do get cleared up over time, and after passing through all this, there is a new solidarity. As the women say:

The purest form of gold emerges only after it has passed through high temperatures.

Though the process of bringing about internal changes is fraught with problems and personal dissatisfaction, women feel that it is the best way to learn and improve one's own self-confidence.

5 TRAINING FOR EMPOWERMENT

The empowerment process is directly facilitated through a series of training sessions that are participatory and experiential. In its widest sense, the training offers time and space to the worker, gives her opportunities for reflection, enhances her individual abilities, reinforces collective efforts and the resultant group wisdom as a means of solving problems.

The curriculum

The training comprises on-field guided learning and off-the-field orientation and reflection. The retreats, that generally range from two to five days, give women the opportunity to get together and learn in groups, share experiences, and also have a break from their daily chores. The methodology of training is deeply rooted in the tradition and culture familiar to the group. Despite the similarity in methodology and approaches, the content of the training keeps changing in view of the needs of the group at a given point of time. A conceptual framework is presented in Fig.7.

The Sahayoginis who are part of the district training team undergo training in gender sensitivity, planning and organisation, and process documentation. In addition, they acquire specialised inputs in selected areas like health, child care, literacy, and legal or economic issues that have been identified by Mahila Samakhya as potential areas of intervention.

All women who play leadership roles at the village level (the Sakhi, Balsakhi, Sangha and Committee members) receive training in gender sensitivity. Women introspect about their own situations and gain indepth understanding of issues of gender and patriarchy. As the group is helped to analyse their own lives and circumstances, barriers break down and a sense of equality, sisterhood, and camaraderie develops.

The topics for specific training vary from group to group based on the activity that the Sangha desires to take up. These may be issues like literacy, water management, construction of Mahila Kutirs, management of child care centres, initiation of savings groups and so on. The methodology used in these training sessions is quite unique, allowing every person to grow based on her interests and capacities. The following essential features are retained in all training programmes:

- Evolving common rules and deciding responsibilities by consensus for the period of training – a process of setting group norms
- Reducing the gap between trainer and trainee. For this, many methods including sharing personal lives and beliefs are used to establish a sense of commonality and equality

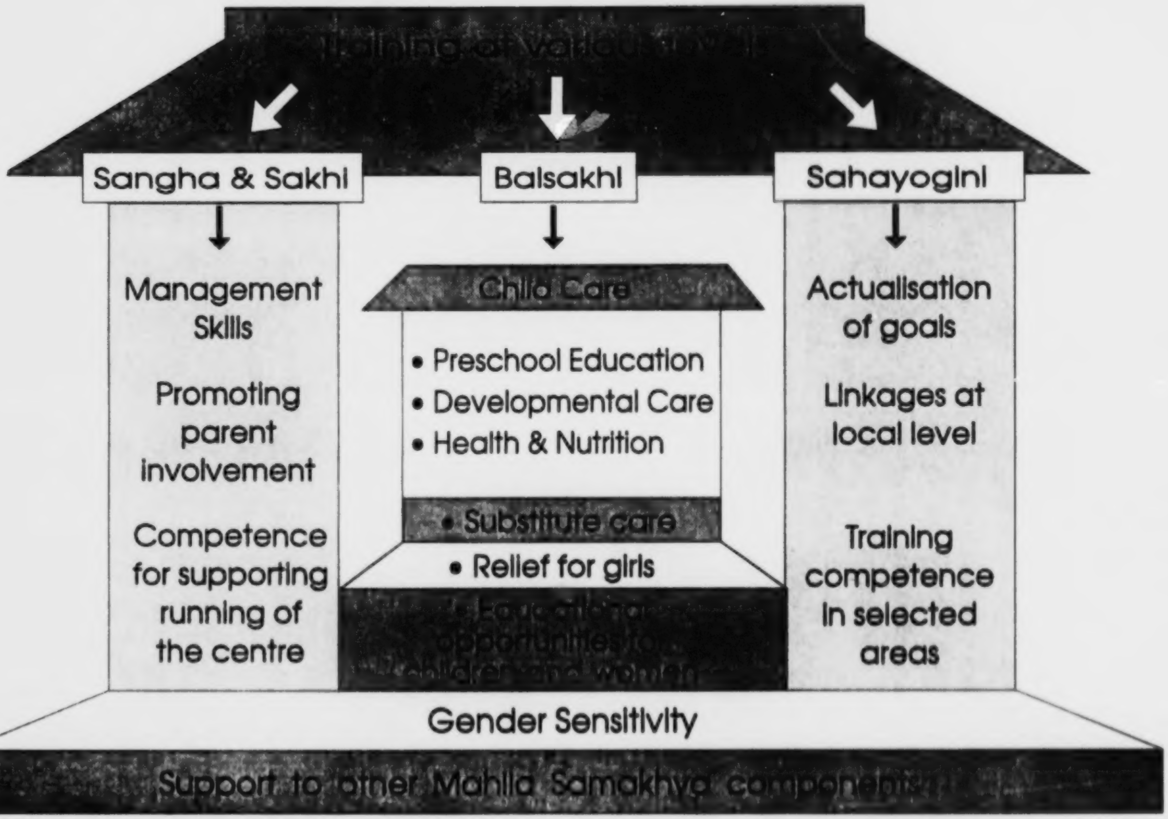
Training at various levels
Sangha & Sakhi
Balsakhi
Sahayogini
Management Skills
Promoting parent involvement
Competence for supporting running of the centre
Child Care
• Preschool Education
• Developmental Care
• Health & Nutrition
• Substitute care
• Relief for girls
• Educational opportunities for children and women
Actualisation of goals
Linkages at local level
Training competence in selected areas
Gender Sensitivity
Support to other Mahila Samakhya components

Fig.7 Skills and competencies for child care – a conceptualisation

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- Giving a chance to everyone to speak and be heard

- Sharing experiences and learning from one another

- Gaining opportunities to experience collective strength and energy

Specifics of training in child care

Training for child care within MS has evolved on the same broad principles and ideology of the programme. Initially, the training on some selected issues was carried out by external resource persons. MS then developed specific modules for each of the components with the support of a consultant (the author) from the Department of Human Development and Family Studies, Maharaja Sayajirao University, Vadodara.

In line with the concept of decentralised management, all women receive some minimal training on important aspects of care of children and management of centres. Further training in specific areas are planned for committees, Balsakhis and Sahayoginis, often separately, depending on the responsibilities they need to execute. Details of content of training and personnel trained are found in Appendix 4.

An innovative methodology

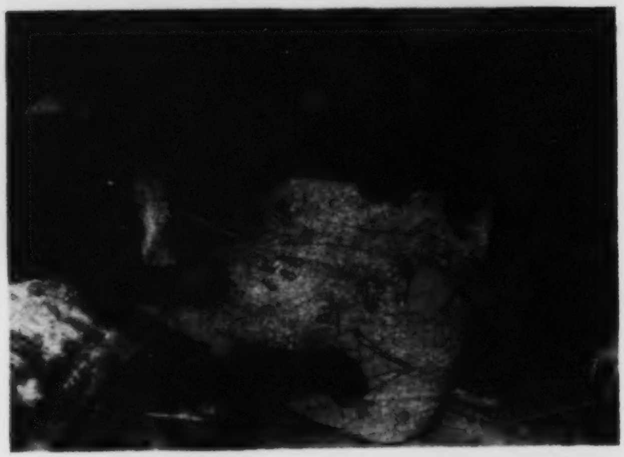
The major challenge is to support ordinary village women (who probably have gone out for action and responsibility for the first time in their lives) at the grass roots. Therefore, the primary concern has been to adapt training to the needs of child care centres emerging in the villages and to problems encountered by women in their initiation and management. These women have little or no education and often do not have the time or patience to sit and listen. They themselves are mothers and have family responsibilities and cannot be away from home for long periods of time. The format that emerged within these constraints (or potential for alternatives as one may believe them to be!) took the form of camps, cluster meetings, workshops, village Sangha meetings, field visits, and celebrations.

Training camps

All training retreats are participatory in nature with heavy reliance on popular songs, games, drama, art and crafts, films and simulated exercises. Expression through drawings combined with discussion bring out the salient features and logic behind every activity and the main agenda that requires attention. Drama and role playing, drawing and pattern making are used to understand women's perception about what facilities a child care centre should have, how children learn, what children of different ages do, etc.

Introspection and recollection of what they themselves were as children and what activities changed their thinking and approach to problems help trainees to gain ideas about planning appropriate projects for enhancing children's development.

A variety of games that aid in breaking the ice and overcoming inhibitions of speech, movement, and emotional expressions are



Draw and Dialogue

Remembering childhood

encouraged throughout the training sessions – riddles and puzzles, guessing games, relay races, paired activities.

Songs and drawings are developed in order to recapitulate, memorise and reflect on what has been taught and learnt.

As women come back with new challenges, new techniques that respond to the needs keep evolving and therefore the methodology is as much a trial and challenge to the trainers as is the content to the trainees.

A day in a training session

The place is Dhaba Dungri, 20 km from Vadodara city, where there is a dormitory, a temple and a kitchen situated on a little hill. Women arrive from their villages in groups of two, three or four. Some of them bring their young children along. There is general excitement in the air. Women sing together, and invoke the blessings of the almighty.

There are two major items on the agenda previously decided collectively by facilitators (Sahayoginis) for this day's activities – to evolve a model of a child care centre, and to understand how children learn. After an introductory game, the trainer explains the event planned – Draw and Dialogue. Each member takes up drawing material and attempts to make a sketch of her village and her image of a child care facility. As women share their concepts, new ideas come through. Shanta drew a picture of children playing under a tree, while a caregiver supervises; Jayashree focussed on the mother and her relief, Rashmi on the interesting activities offered by the caregiver. Bachi drew children inside the house in rainy weather and outdoors in sunshine. Jyotsna drew a picture of women working in the fields and their children being cared for on site. Chandan showed young girls reading and playing at the centre and one more where children of different castes come together. Each one describes vividly through her pictures her understanding of the village problems and needs. The trainees collectively reflect on what is feasible, where, how, and when and discuss anticipated barriers to making their vision a reality. Sometimes, the trainer may highlight, in her own picture, some components of MS philosophy and, in discussion, reinforce the variety and innovativeness in each woman's vision for her village.

Learning by doing

Now, after a brief break, it's role play time. Some women get together and enact scenes of their own villages, Sangha meetings, informal talks, initiation of child care centres, follow-up changes, etc. They depict how girls could go to school. The Sangha members meet the school teacher to ensure good treatment to the girls. They further assure him that now the older girls will be up-to-date in homework as they have less burden of child care. Other depictions include women coming in for a brief chat and relaxation with the child after a tiring day. There is much fun, teasing and laughter generated during these activities, which are interspersed with discussions and meal breaks.

There are a few toys and indigenous materials like puppets, rattles, boxes and so

Learning how children learn

Moving to music

on. Women pick up the materials and do some activity with them. For example, if it's a drum, they hit it, throw it, beat it, jump or dance with it. The rule of the game is that no action should be repeated. With about 30 women, the group has more than 100 ideas generated in a single session. Everyone sits together to talk about an activity one has been doing since childhood, like making roti, combing hair, etc. Each person is expected to describe how she first learnt it. The emerging discussion brings out various processes involved in learning a concept or a skill. Since the trainees themselves are involved in activities and analyses, the whole process is pleasurable and non-threatening.

Evening is the time for singing and dancing. Old favourite feminist themes are highlighted in the singing. Jyotsna and Jayashree get busy with the trainer to compose a new song about child care and the responsibilities and tasks of the Sangha and so it emerges: *Through our collective strength we can do it and show.* Songs have been a boon in training sessions.

Visits, tours and celebrations

The visit of women from one village or a cluster to other villages where child care centres function, offers an opportunity for observing the environment and identifying similarities and differences from one's own situation. Orientation to diversity in problems and solutions, and adopting appropriate features to one's situation are the two major goals served by the visits. The visitors offer an outsider's view objectively on issues that may be complex; thus visits become mutually supportive. Renuka, a Sahayogini says:

> *We understand differences in our situations, but more the similarities and universalities of women's lives. Sharing gives so much pleasure and rejuvenates us. It further reinforces our achievements and self-confidence, thus motivating us to go further, discovering something new in every encounter.*

Celebrations offer opportunities for self-expression, as women sing, enact plays, put up posters and placards, and communicate awareness and ideas to a larger group of people in the village. Celebrations make women and their activities visible in the village. Built into this process is organisation, management and liaisoning skills that empower women and improve their self-esteem.

Resource materials

During and after the training, the Balsakhis receive support materials that are pictorial with minimal written messages. These help in reinforcing the Balsakhi's roles and responsibilities, developmental needs of children, activities for children. They receive song books, stories and educational material, all of which are a integrated collection from the MS villages.

Cluster meetings

The Balsakhis of one cluster of villages meet on a regular monthly basis and discuss issues and problems and share concerns of individual centres. Bringing issues in the open prompts problem solving, offers a platform for emotional catharsis, and awareness of strong moral support. In addition, it provides a platform to obtain feedback on the impediments in the organisational, administrative or policy structure and suggestions for their alteration.

Although this experience is still in the formative stage, it has the potential to develop into a sophisticated approach and model for training.

Meeting training needs from within or outside?

Training inputs in the area of child care have received greater attention in comparison to other issues in terms of time as well as coverage. The newer Sahayoginis, Sangha members and Balsakhis express a strong need for training primarily in areas of communication, mobilisation and management, as also aspects of child development and care. The women feel a greater need for training to be imparted at Sangha level within villages or clusters as they believe that it is more convenient and also makes the process "visible" to others in the village.

The difficult choice is whether to set up a district training team from within or rely on external resource persons who fit into the MS ideology. Many Sahayoginis (about 70%) still feel the need for external resource persons. This is because the Sahayoginis have numerous responsibilities and are hard pressed for time to develop specialised skills for child care training (see Appendix 5). Is it possible to evolve clear guidelines with varied scope of work for Sahayoginis to utilise their individual time and talents ?

> The training offers time and space to the worker, gives her opportunities for reflection, enhances her individual abilities, reinforces collective efforts and the resultant group wisdom as a means of solving problems.

6 THE CENTRES TODAY

In the last four years, a total of 63 child care centres have been started across the four districts of Rajkot, Sabarkantha, Banaskantha and Vadodara, of which 17 are running without any financial support from Mahila Samakhya. Vadodara district alone has 28 child care centres of which 18 centres have financial support from Mahila Samakhya, while the others are still at the developing stage, exploring various resources at local levels and awaiting funds from MS.

Table 6 **Profile of Child Care Centres**

	Rural	Tribal	Total	%
1. Centres				
with MS funding	6	12	18	64
without MS funding	6	4	10	36
Total	12	16	28	100
2. Range				
Enrolment	20-65	21-62		
Attendance	15–40	18–35		
3. Number/age of children attending				
0-1 year	70	178	248	27
1-3 years	180	216	396	44
3-6 years	155	98	253	28
Total	405	492	897	100
4. Mothers' age				
Below 21 years	15	6	21	6
21-25 years	35	71	106	32
26-30 years	118	90	208	62
Total	168	167	*335	100
5. Adult - child ratio	1:10-16	1:8-18		
6. Income range of the families (per month)				
- Mother's income	Rs. 50-500			
- Family income	Rs. 1000-1200			

* *Data for remaining mothers not available.*

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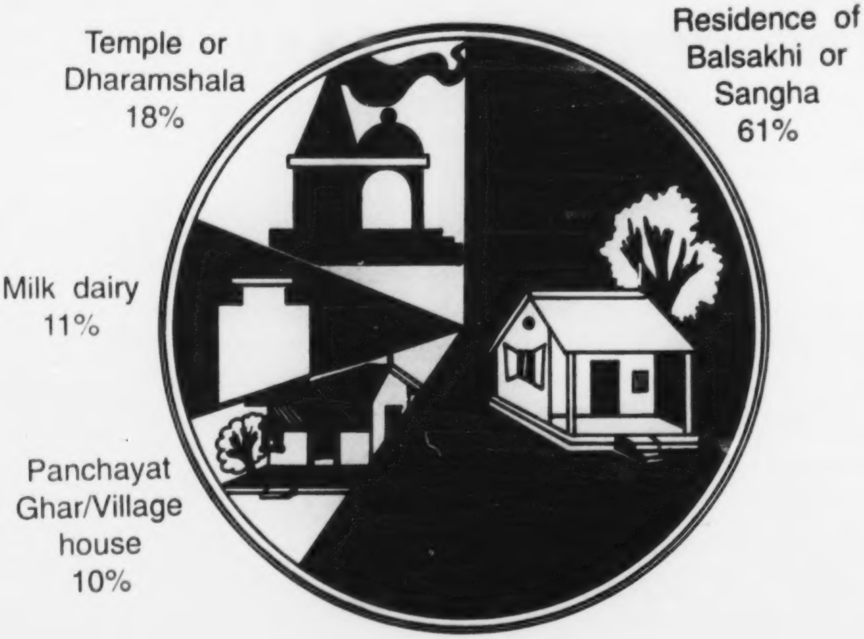


Fig.8 Where the centres are housed

Most families who send their children to the centre are agricultural labourers who use the centres full-time. Other families send their children for about two to four hours, either when they go for outdoor tasks, or as a means of stimulation. In some villages, mothers send their children to the centre full-time only on days they have employment. Therefore, average attendance is not more than 35 to 40, though some centres may have 65 children enrolled.

Where are the centres housed ?

As Fig.8 shows, the centres are housed mostly in the Balsakhi's residence. The local temple or dharamshala, the milk dairy and the panchayat office are also used in some villages. In three villages, children are cared for simultaneously in two locations, for it is difficult for them to walk from one *falia* (cluster of houses) to another, especially during the monsoon. Some centres have made the place a little more stimulating by indigenous toys or pictures. If it is the Balsakhi's home or the milk dairy, the place is cleared up and arranged for children every day. The materials and toys are stored in boxes, in a handy way. In pleasant weather children spend much time outdoors.

For how long are they open?

Timing has been essentially flexible. Some centres run from 11:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., whereas others begin at 8:00 a.m. when mothers leave for work. The mothers return home during lunch time around 12:00 noon and pick their children up. This is the time for the Balsakhi to cope with her own household work and return to the child care centre by 2:00 pm, when children return as their mothers go back to work. Yet other centres work from 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. When needed, the mother has the option of leaving her child with the Balsakhis earlier or later but it has to be accepted by the Sangha. Most Sanghas decide to keep the centres open for longer hours during the monsoon (July /August to October/November), a peak season for agricultural work. During summer, a low season, centres are kept open from 8:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m., varying with women's needs, and as decided by the Sangha. (Fig.9)

Centres are generally closed on Sundays, and during festivals and community events, though a few stay open on Sundays (about 15%). Special occasions and national festivals are celebrated with the children in almost all centres.

Supplementary nutrition

There is a firm belief among Sangha members that food should not become the major source of attraction for children. Sanghas have emerged with alternative sources as described in Fig.10. This has been a very difficult task in view of the limited resources. A Sangha narrates its experience:

Our Sangha found dry, ready-to-eat snacks convenient; the bulk that "murmura channa" (puffed rice with roasted Bengal gram) offered appealed to children. But, soon

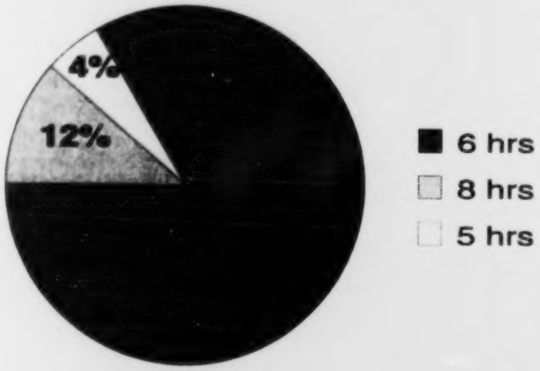


Fig.9 Working hours of the centres

Extended time during peak working season in 40% of the centres *enough, we realised that children do get hungry quickly, especially the little ones, and this is not what they eat at home. So we discussed with Sahayoginis and DRPs and identified common foods eaten in the village that are not too costly. The list included bajra, makai, channa, moong, poha, jaggery and seasonal vegetables grown on our own land or nearby. We then worked out simple, easily cooked recipes.*

We decide when to feed children, based on mothers' work schedules, and centre timings. For example, if the mother leaves at 10:00 a.m. and returns at 5:00 p.m., children eat their meal at home before coming. They either eat the anganwadi food or tiffin in the afternoon and our meal is served after 4.00 p.m. Children bring tiffin in some centres when they do not go home to eat. We know that the quantity is not enough, but we have to manage until we find other resources. What is good is that all members help out and share difficulties.

The programme for children

Children in the villages of Gujarat are integrated into the everyday routine of adults. As parents get busy with their work, children either loiter around, play or help in small tasks. They go to the fields, the pond or the grocer. When parents do not have the choice of spending more time or resources on their children, they grow up with minimal care and attention. The open and non-restrictive environment does offer opportunities for learning by exploration and observation. Parents are often concerned

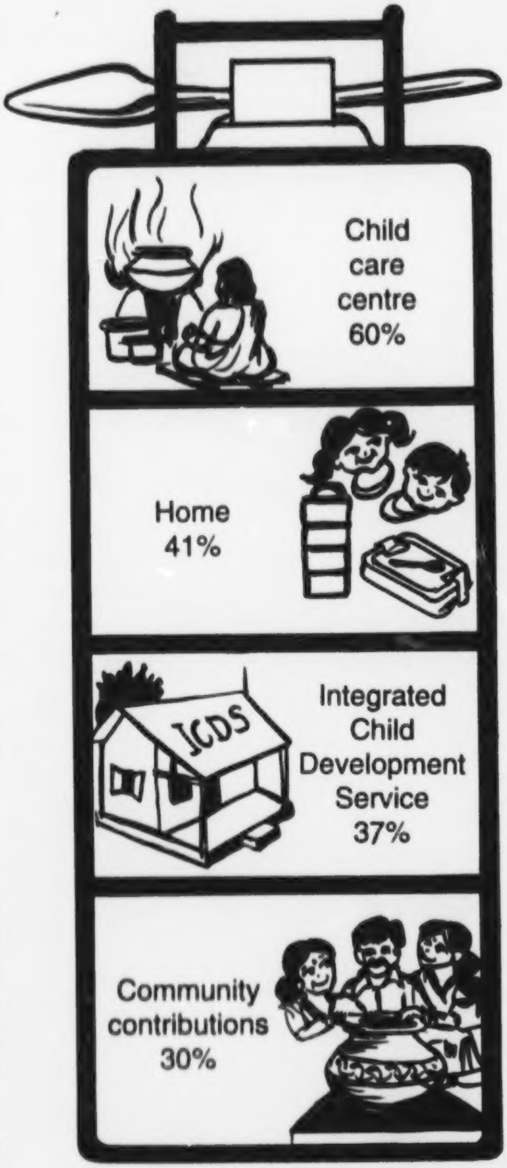


Fig.10 Source of meals

** Percentages total to more than 100 as most centres have more than one source.*

Opportunities for physical development

about their children not doing well in school or going astray. As such, it is quite natural for the Sanghas to want that their children should have a safe, clean, nurturing environment with some opportunities to learn. Thus, in most cases, the activities in the child care centres have emerged spontaneously, from natural concern and commitment. The older children take the lead to organise activities and games for the younger ones. Balsakhis have received training inputs that give them several ideas for planning activities for children.

A Balsakhi's day in the centre

I begin my day after some preliminary household work. Children start dropping in at the centre as the mothers go to work, or elders take the cattle for grazing. Some children are clean, others need to be cleaned, as the mothers were in a hurry. Often, I have to comfort a crying child when receiving another. When all the children arrive, we sing a prayer and "Dhun" (bhajan). The children then play games in groups. We sing songs, or tell stories. The centre has some wooden and clay toys, others are plastic. It is a little hard to make the children share the toys, but we have to manage with what we have. One of us introduces counting and writing or alphabets to older children. The others either listen or play on their own.

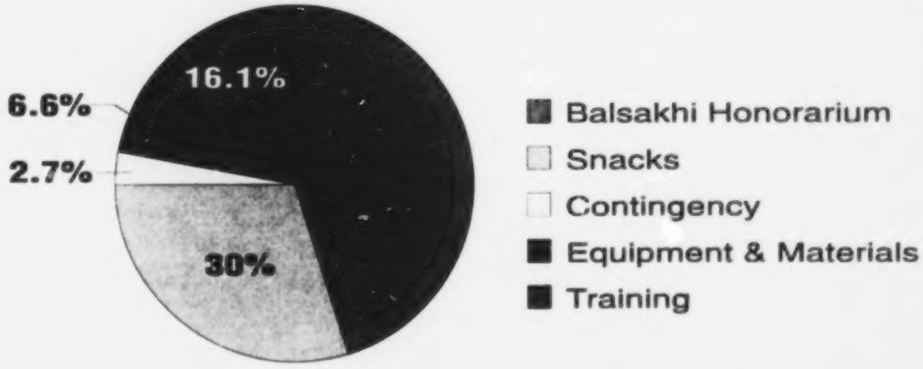
My village has an anganwadi. Children eat at home in the morning and in the afternoon at the anganwadi. We provide our snack in the late afternoon. Parents and Sangha women drop in on a regular basis, sometimes to help us, sometimes to look at how we are doing. We need more training to make our centre better!

7 THE FINANCIAL PICTURE

The three interlinked issues of child care - costs, quality and goals - have merited much discussion within MS. However, the priority accorded to evolving clarity in goals and finding solutions to problems has varied. As a result, some issues continue to plague the child care activity, despite efforts to find creative solutions. A central concern in the first two years of operation of the child care component (1991-93) had been on the priority to be accorded to the goal of women's empowerment vs. meeting children's multiple needs. After much discussion at several forums, there is now a consensus on the centrality of focus, i.e., creation of women friendly child care support that leads to women's empowerment. However, there is also agreement that the quality of the programme determines its utilisation as well as the benefits.

Programme costs

Figure 11 reveals the pattern of expenditure of every rupee allocated to child care. This shows certain positive features of the programme, such as minimal establishment costs due to the high level of community



No. of children covered : 520 (approx.)
Cost per child : Rs. 429.50 per year/Rs. 35.30 per month

Fig.11 Pattern of expenditure on child care [1994-95]

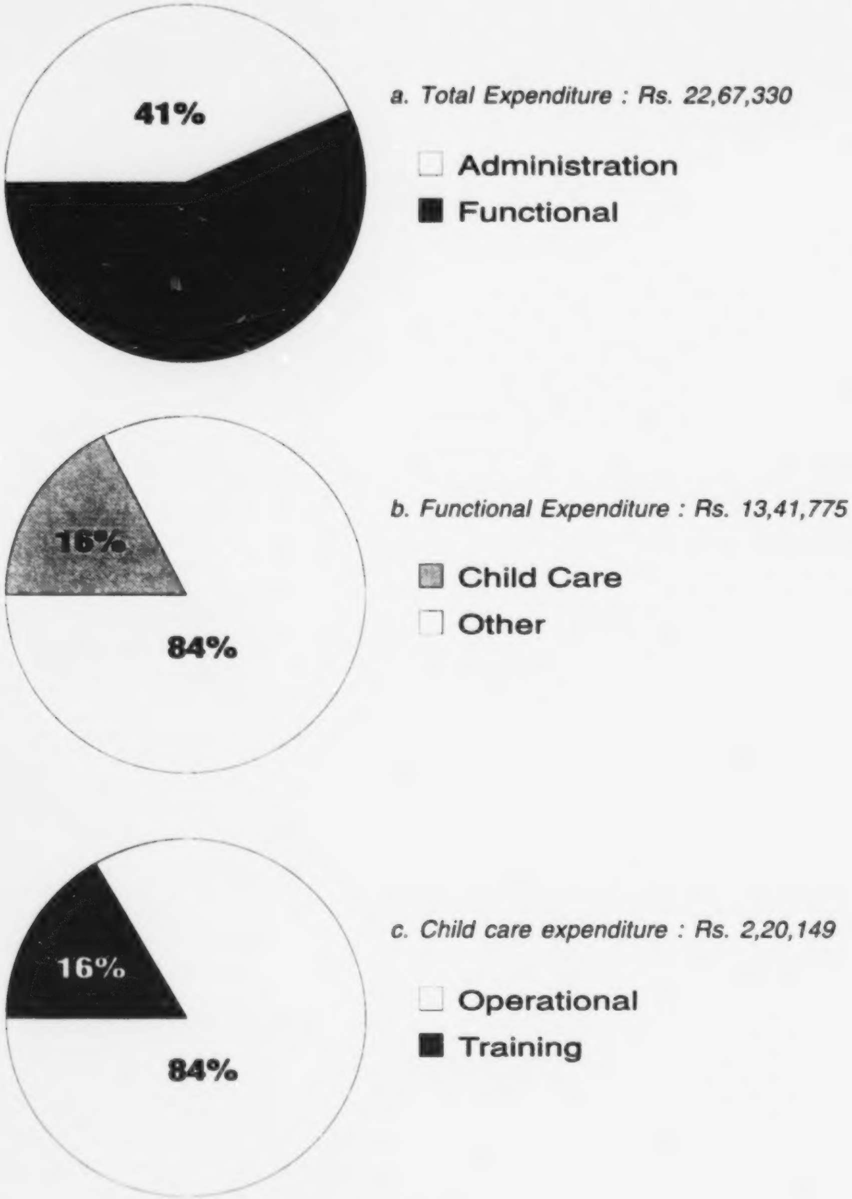


Fig.12 Pattern of expenditure of MS Vadodara 1994-1995

involvement. Experiences of some other agencies show that much more is required for a good quality full-time centre. An amount of Rs. 36 per month per child in the MS programme is too low, despite some costs being met by the community. Hence, the Balsakhis' honorarium and provision for snacks form major part of the expenditure.

Figs.12a, b, c throw light on the pattern of expenditure in MS Vadodara. At first sight, the high administrative costs attract attention. An innovative programme that focuses on development of human potential and social change processes does call for high administrative costs, at least in the initial stages. However, the hidden benefits are in the development of human power and mobilisation of other resources that would contribute to programme costs at n future time. In addition, some part of the cost of personnel which is included in administrative cost gets distributed into the functional cost across various components, one of which is child care.

Child care costs form about one-sixth of the total functional cost which gives a clue to the priority accorded to it and time available from MS functionaries. Of this, one-sixth again is spent on training, which is an extremely important part of the MS programme.

A point to be noted is that some part of the cost of training – for resource materials such as books and journals, musical instruments, and so on, utilised by child care centres – is drawn from other funds earmarked for Sanghas. Further, the State probably expects MS to play the role of watch dog and promote better utilisation of other available services by networking at local levels.

Differing perceptions

What strikes an observer most is the inappropriate and inadequate funds allocated for child care in an innovative and process-oriented programme of this nature. The answer would probable lie in the insufficient attention paid to the programmatic components in the planning of MS. While adequate attention has been given to the philosophy, non-negotiable principles and women-centred processes, the grant for support services (in this case, child care) has been directly adopted from the Central Social Welfare Board (CSWB) pattern for running creches. (Table 7) This was possibly decided on an ad hoc basis when the programme was being conceived in 1987-88.

It is noteworthy that the CSWB pattern has been changed subsequently in view of increased costs of living, but MS has not been able to do the same. Nor has MS yet come to terms with the financial implications of actualising a woman-friendly child care support system.

Though MS is considered an autonomous body, channelisation of funds through Government leads to circumstances that create hierarchical structures contrary to the programme ideology. Often problems are perceived differently at the grass roots level and the State level. Initiative was taken at the

Table 7 **Grant available for child care centre (unit of 25 children)**

1. Honorarium for two full-time child care workers (Rs 500/month)	Rs. 6000/-
2. Educational materials/toys/ supplementary nutrition @ 65 p/child/day	Rs. 5076/-
3. Contingencies (Rs. 40/month)	Rs. 480/-
4. Weekly visits by doctor/ medicines (Rs. 150/month)	Rs. 1800/-
5. Training stipend (Rs 350/month)	Rs. 4200/-
Total recurring budget available	**Rs. 17,556/-**
6. Non-recurring grant for a period of 5 years.	Rs. 4000/-

Sangha level to convert the budget meant for supplementary nutrition for the children to provision for education toys, but a directive from the top reconverted it. The goals of the child care centres change as Sanghas grow and are empowered to think critically. Their immediate need is for visibility, power, and need for control over available resources.

Many recommendations have been made to the MS Executive Council to alter the financial structure for child care. Budget provisions based on per capita expenditure per child at the rate of Rs. 150/per child/per month have been sought. Even after nearly three years of follow up, actual changes are yet to come through.

Pattern of utilisation

Equally striking is the different story emerging from actual expenditure patterns (Fig.13a, b). It appears that even the available funds are underutilised. One of the reasons for this may be the lack of flexibility in the grant pattern. The unused expenditure for doctors and medicines in view of linkage with local PHCs cannot, for example, be diverted to other expenditures. Further, neither the non-recurring grant nor lapsed expenditure in training can be used to meet per capita child expenditure, when there are more than 25 children per centre (which is a reality in more than 50% of centres).

Sahayoginis speak

– MS needs to increase the money for snacks; it should be based on the number of children, and not a fixed amount per centre.

– Balsakhi's honorarium should be increased. Should we not give at least minimum wages?

– Accounting procedures are difficult, especially for women with little literacy.

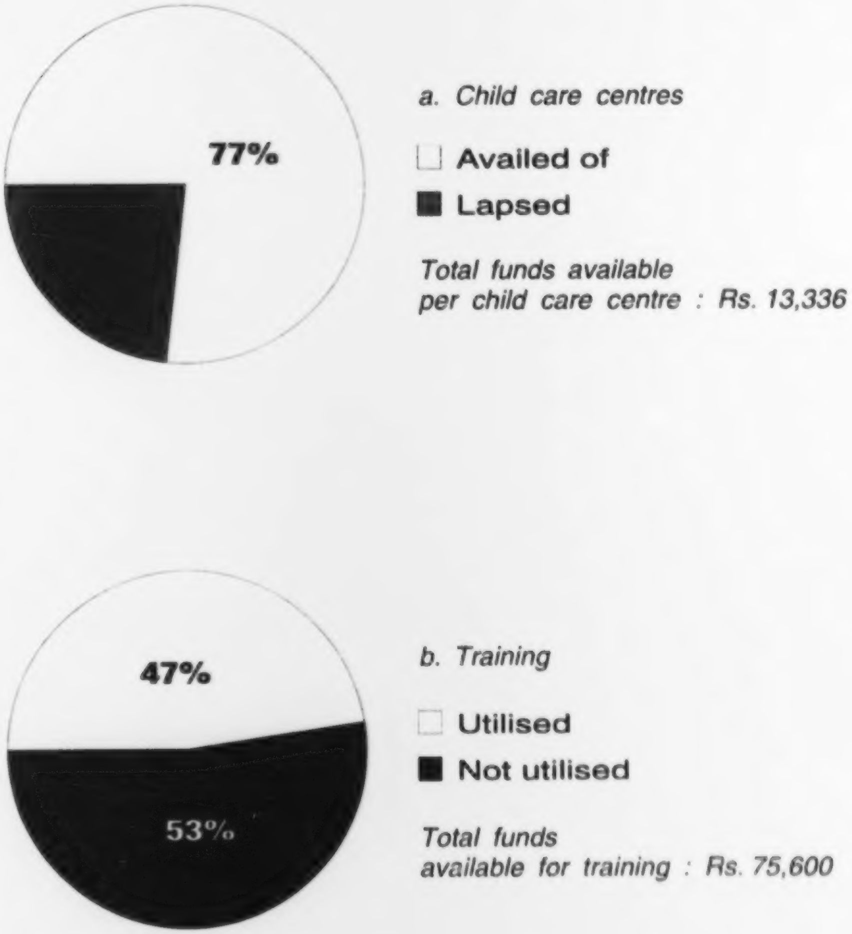


Fig.13 Pattern of utilisation of funds 1994-1995

– Sanghas that carry responsibilities should have the freedom to decide what they want and how they want it.

– At the policy level, the pattern of child care grants should become more flexible, so that the motivation for action is sustained.

– We and the Sanghas need more training and inputs from specialists in selected areas, especially in view of decentralisation.

Sources of funds and sustainability

The MS programme obtains its funds from the Netherlands Government under the bilateral aid programme channelled through the Government of India and the State Education Department. At present, the grant is available up to the year 1997 and it is expected that it may be continued for five more years. Since the major focus has been on mobilisation of a "process", and funds have been viewed as a means to the same, energies have been diverted towards that end, with few inputs into the thought of sustainability. Much discussion on this issue has been taking place at different levels. At present, funds for child care within MS amount to a meagre Rs. 36 per child/per month (excluding medical cost), for meeting recurring expenditures. Additional sources are in the form of community contributions for nutrition (in 30-50% of centres), free premises (in 100% centres), free labour of Balsakhi (who either works for a small honorarium or on a voluntary basis until funds are disbursed) and Sangha members, and some equipment or materials to the centre such as musical instruments, dhurries, toys, utensils, etc. These resources are highly inadequate. Liaisoning with existing public health services and the ICDS or a local NGO has been an ongoing activity, but ineffective to fulfil the many emerging needs.

Thinking, planning and action for sustainability is of recent origin in MS with reference to child care. The options are:

- approaching religious bodies at the village level and panchayats for funds
- utilising money available with savings groups
- increasing MS funds for child care
- increasing Sanghas' contributions and the nominal fee charged per child

At the taluka, State and district levels, the authorities have been approached for additional funding possibilities. Systematic action has yet to be planned to mobilise non-government funds for the programme.

The quality of the programme determines its utilisation as well as the benefits.

8 CHANGING LIVES

Sahayoginis and Sangha members express a sense of tremendous satisfaction at this juncture, despite all the problems that are constantly encountered. It has been a challenge to evaluate the intangible and indirect effects in the absence of any systematic records or research inputs. Focussed group discussions with Sanghas, Balsakhis and Sahayoginis helped to reflect on outcomes in individual women's lives and on the village community. Further, the periodic discussions in Sahayogini meetings evaluated the general progress towards MS goals (Appendix 6). Analyses of Sahayogini reports gave further clues to successes and failures.

Have women's lives changed in any way?

The answer to this is a definite "Yes" by women at all levels. Most visible is the increase in their self-confidence and pride in acquiring new skills. Fig.14 illustrates this.

Sahayoginis talk about the time and space offered to them by the child care facility:

– After the establishment of the child care centre, a mother could go for work without tension, relieved of one of her major responsibilities. In between she can come to feed her child. She is also able to devote two to three hours for meetings which she earlier could not because of her tension and anxiety.

– Previously, only mothers-in-law came to the centre. Now the daughters-in-law have got an opportunity to come out of their homes because their children are in the centre. So the centre has become a place where they can discuss their problems in the open and find solutions.

– Women now have a place and the company of other women to share problems with and also to relax with.

– In my village, women leave even 8 or 10-day old infants in the centre and go out for a while. The mental stress on the mother is less, because she can work, earn and attend to other family responsibilities.

– In Ganpatpura village, a Harijan woman was chosen as the Balsakhi as she was educated. She was accepted by others and even performed the "pooja" for the centre.

– In Sadad village, we have been able to reach the poor and needy, thus increasing their women's status as they take part in management and decision making.

The Sangha members say:

– Our family income has increased. One person could earn only about Rs. 300 a month, even taking up employment on all available days. Now, two of us, either mother and daughter or mother-in-law and

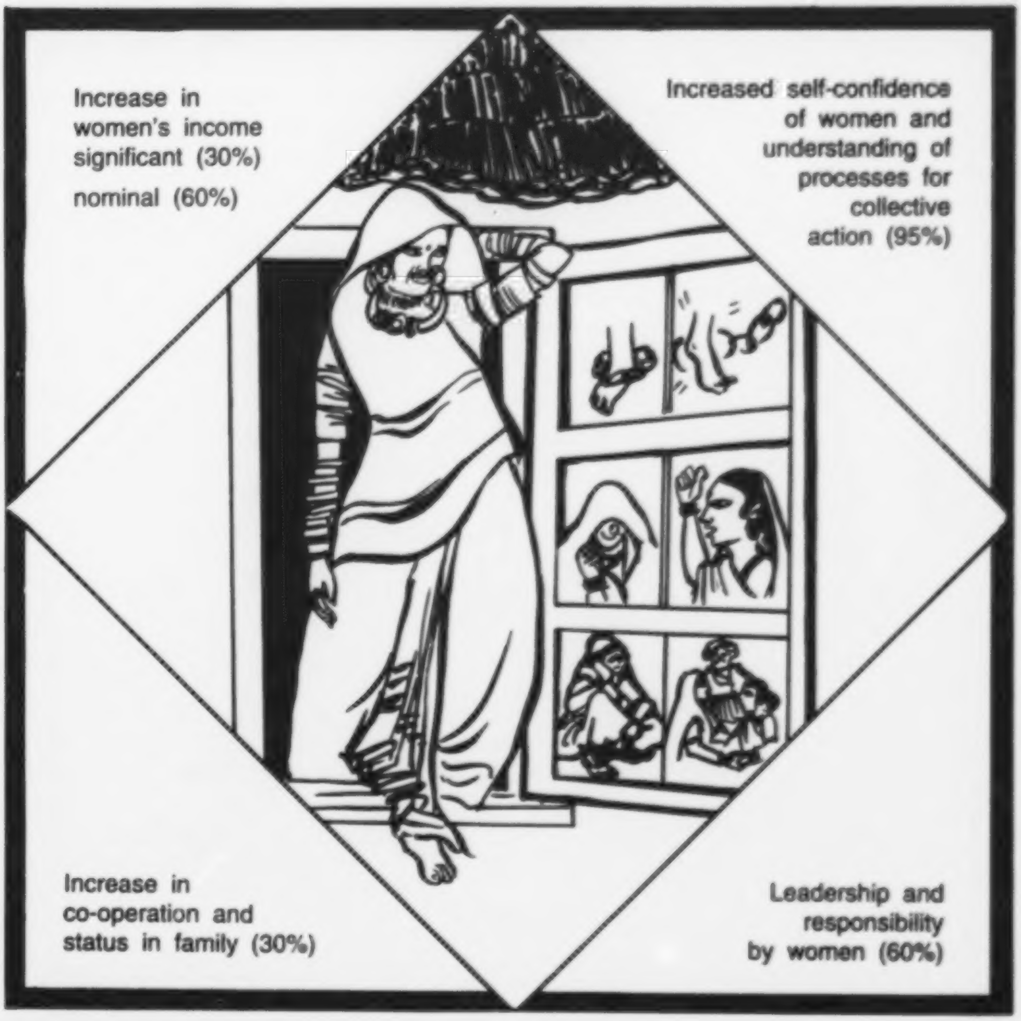

Increase in women's income significant (30%) nominal (60%)
Increased self-confidence of women and understanding of processes for collective action (95%)
Increase in co-operation and status in family (30%)
Leadership and responsibility by women (60%)

Fig.14 Changes in women's lives in villages with child care

Note : Percentages indicate the presence of the phenomenon in the villages as reported by functionaries and Sanghas.

daughter-in-law, can go to work and so earn Rs.600.

– Though we do not go to work, we have indirect economic benefits. We either go to our fields to help or go out to collect more fuel for the whole month (otherwise we have to spend Rs. 150 on kerosene).

– How can we learn if we sit at home? This is the best thing that has happened to us. In setting up the centre and running it, we have found time and space for ourselves and understood the process of fighting for our rights.

– I used to be so irritated and scold and beat my children as they disturbed all my activities. But now I have peace of mind, so I spend some pleasant time with them.

– We don't fall sick so often nor do our children, because we have less physical and mental stress.

– We feel most happy and proud about the centre we have created - it is the pride of our village and we were one of the first to do it. Everyone in the community consults us on important matters.

Have children's and girls' live changed?

From Fig.15 it is evident that in about 70% of the villages more girls went to school, and in 40% of the villages women perceived that their children's enthusiasm, adjustment, school performance and language skills improved. There is no doubt that the time of child caregivers has been released for other activities.

There has been no systematic study nor is comparative data yet available to understand changes in children's lives. In the perception of Sangha members, Sahayoginis and Balsakhis, these changes are due to the processes involved in setting up child care. Their varied observations provide definite clues to the changes taking place in the lives around them.

Balsakhi Chandamaa narrates her story

Chandamaa is what children call me fondly. Sangeeta, a young girl, assists me in running the centre. Even housewives and grandmothers, who were caring for their children themselves, now send them to the centre. We did not have a place. So the Sangha took the initiative to procure permission to use the milk cooperative and we feel proud that we have made things work. I am very confident and tackle men's questions. They often ask, "What can you widowed women do?" I tell them we are much better than others. I feel so happy when I am with children. My home is taken care of by my son and daughter-in-law and so I have nothing much to do there. Here I experience the space and opportunities to be useful. As of now, both of us Balsakhis are working on a voluntary basis. The Sangha collected money and paid us once. Now we are mobilising resources. I am now recognised for the important contribution I make to my community. My family now respects and supports me.

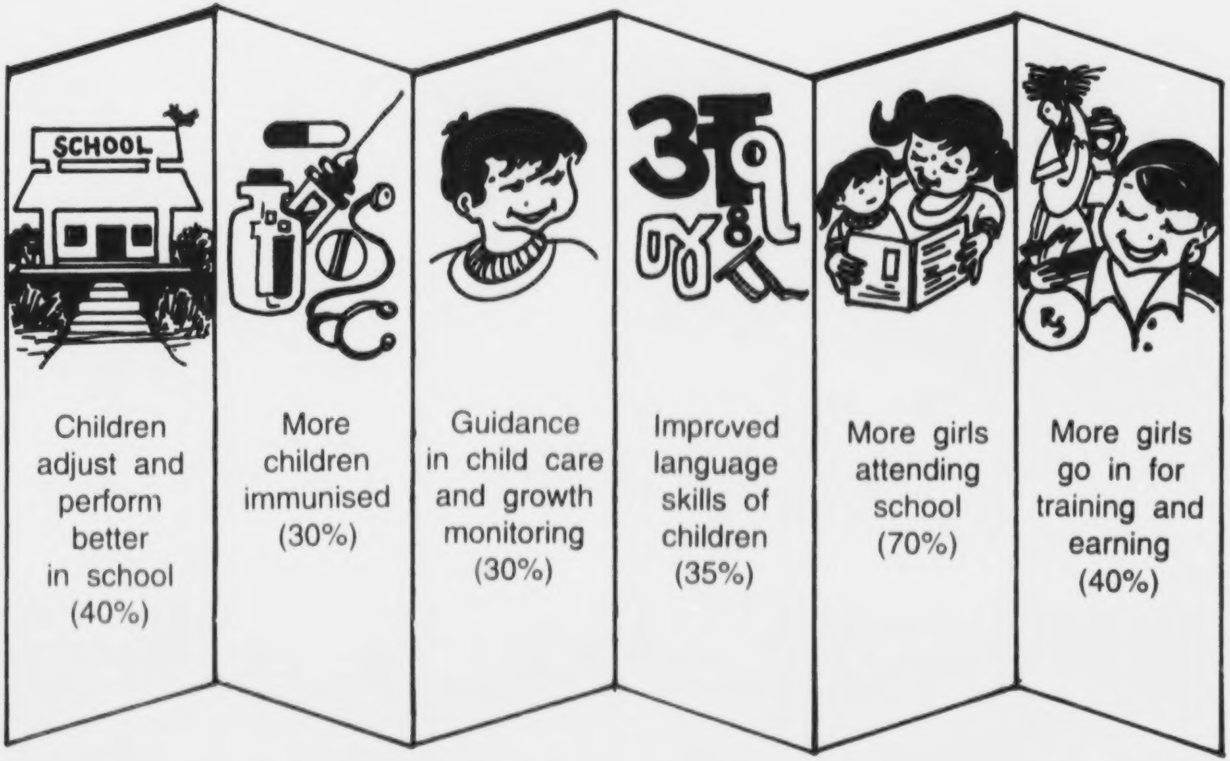

SCHOOL
Children adjust and perform better in school (40%)
More children immunised (30%)
Guidance in child care and growth monitoring (30%)
Improved language skills of children (35%)
More girls attending school (70%)
More girls go in for training and earning (40%)

Fig.15 Changes in children's lives in villages with child care

Note : Percentages indicate the presence of the phenomenon in the villages as reported by functionaries and Sanghas.

Sahayoginis and Sangha members state their views :

– Our children were very shy and did not speak much. Now they have become intelligent and smart, are more confident and enjoy school better. They even get good marks.

– Our children's health is better as mothers are more aware, immunisations are more regular, and they are no more exposed to stresses of weather.

– In Timbi village, eleven girls were enrolled in school this year. Girls also attended school more regularly. Older children from the child care centre were enrolled into school. Thirteen year old Balsakhi Leela feels that she is learning so much and also contributing to the family purse. Her sister is free to go to work and so the family is better off.

How has the community changed?

The Sanghas, Sahayoginis and DRPs share a strong feeling that the work of MS with specific reference to child care has brought about increased interaction in the community, especially among women, offered visibility to Sanghas' activities, and brought about better linkages in community services. The women vocalise:

– The child care centre has become the place for everyone to meet. Visitors from voluntary agencies, health workers, and NGOs come to visit. Even the postal service drops and picks up mail from here.

– Only a few women were coming to Sangha meetings in the beginning, whereas now all mothers whose children are in the centre take interest in the Sangha's activities. They look forward to going out and learning more.

– In our village, mothers from lower castes cautioned their children against touching food or water or eating with other children. Gradually, upper and lower caste children and mothers have mingled with each other. Now, Harijan women send their children without hesitation. It is a great achievement.

– All key persons in the village help us in setting up the centre, including the Sarpanch in some villages. Now they know our activities will improve things.

– Now in many villages child care is being viewed as a major support for families. We have been able to successfully involve men and fathers in assisting us. They bring fuel for the centre, sometimes run errands, fix up lights, attend to repairs, and, moreover, convince other men to permit their wives' participation in MS activities.

– In our village, they send the Sangha women to speak to outsiders, be it the police or other government people. People realise we can encounter hurdles and solve problems. It is good to know we can help, but we have to be careful we are not exploited.

Most evident is the expression of faith in themselves for bringing about change in their own lives as against expecting only "fate" to change the situation.

9 LOOKING BACK

The setting up of a community-based child care centre is a long-drawn-out process that requires continuous support and monitoring. Often when the Sangha is mobilised, ready to take up responsibility, and has made decisions, there emerges some other matter that needs the urgent attention of every one concerned. The child care issue gets sidetracked. Sometimes, the ideology contradicts the action on the field. One wrong move can undo many previous achievements. On revival, the process again needs special additional inputs. Some achievements and weaknesses are enumerated below.

Achievements

- Concept of flexibility has reached the grass-root level
- Child care model supports women and girls
- Programmes initiated and sustained with little or no supervisory inputs
- Trained womanpower available in villages, with capacity for working towards sustaining the centre and women-related issues
- Successful effort to refrain from target orientation and retain importance of processes

Weaknesses

- Quality needs much improvement
- Inability to actualise child-centred approach in the field
- Increased responsibility for child care worker in places where Sanghas/committees do not participate fully
- Inability to influence policy in a strong way or bring about changes in financial structure despite many recommendations

Decentralisation

There is general satisfaction about learning through decentralisation. Evidence for this is seen in varied reflections:

– Our centre belongs to us and is not a government programme.

– I would prefer to be a Balsakhi than an anganwadi worker as this has internal control.

– We can collectively change things as we wish to our convenience. Nobody dictates terms to us, we have decision-making power.

– The child care centre is the pride of our village.

– Nobody in the village condemns our meetings any more because they have seen the results.

There is no doubt that the approach to evolving the support and decision making is a fully decentralised process. But can one claim this to be "decentralisation of power" when Sanghas and functionaries have not been able to exercise control in altering finances, which is the most crucial part for the success of any programme? When one is not able to draw money from resources available, is it justifiable to ask for greater contributions from families who find it hard to meet their own survival needs?

Opportunities

Child care, a collective dream of many, though an extremely small venture, has received strong support from women at the grass-root level. 60% of mothers availing the service are in the age range of 18 to 24 years, and 90% are less than 30 years old. Hence, this group is a potential force for working towards health, fertility, educational and economic issues that are the major domains for altering women's status. Child care further offers scope for seeking continuous participation as (i) the women who use the facility keep changing over time, and (ii) it is a long way to go before the goals and linkages are actualised and, therefore, women's motivation can be kept alive through sustained efforts.

The opportunities for carrying the programme forward and working towards sustainability are many:

- Establishing liaison between Sanghas and resources
- Working towards change in State/Central policy
- Promoting the concept of child care as a family and community responsibility
- Ensuring child care support as a prerogative of the family, particularly women

Utilisation of these opportunities calls for many alterations in the structure and organisation of MS at Vadodara. Issues like turnover of staff, re-clarification of philosophy and goals, prioritisation of activities, optimal utilisation of functionaries' time and energy, and training need more attention.

Replicability of such a scheme is linked to several issues, since the administrative and overhead costs are high. But it is hoped that what is now a "planned movement" towards social change will take on much deeper roots and truly become a "people's movement".

Health, fertility; educational and economic issues are the major domains for altering women's status.

Appendix 1

MAHILA SAMAKHYA, GUJARAT

The National Policy on Education (NPE) 1986 recognises socio-economic and cultural situations as mainly responsible for low levels of literacy and education among women. A landmark in the field of women's education, it lays "special emphasis on removal of disparities and to equalise educational opportunities by attending to the specific needs of women." In July 1987, Government of India (GOI) formulated a pilot project – Mahila Samakhya – to translate NPE into action. Ten districts of Gujarat, Karnataka and Uttar Pradesh were selected. The Mahila Samakhya (MS) project was approved by GOI in September 1988 and an Indo-Dutch agreement for funding was signed in July 1989.

Mahila Samakhya Gujarat (MSG) was registered as an autonomous body in April 1989 under the Societies' Registration Act, 1861. The programme was initiated in three districts of Gujarat – Rajkot, Sabarkantha, Vadodara – with the help of voluntary agencies active in those areas. The District Implementation Units (DIUs) started functioning in full swing by 1990 at Rajkot, Himmatnagar and Vadodara. The programme has gradually been expanded to Banaskantha district since June 1994, with its DIU at Radhanpur.

Background

The Mahila Samakhya programme is unusual and unique in its approach towards women's education. It aims to mobilise and empower rural women within a clearly worked out ideological framework. The programme is process oriented and there are inbuilt flexibilities. It is designed to expand gradually, seeking guidances not from targets, but from certain inviolable principles which are kept in mind at all stages of implementation. The programme is need-based and the components of the project are designed to facilitate collective reflection/action and expand opportunities for basic education in rural areas. The functionaries play the role of facilitators.

Objectives

The Mahila Samakhya programme is designed on the understanding that collective reflection and decision making can help women to become empowered and bring about social change. It presupposes that education can be a decisive intervention towards women's equality. The overall goal is to create circumstances to enable women to better understand their predicament and move towards a situation where they can determine their own lives and influence their environment.

Approach

Today at MSG, thousands of Sangha women spread in 475 villages gather to discuss many aspects of their lives and explore, perhaps for the first time, their collective strength. They prioritise, as per their requirements, issues of wages, ration cards, water, transportation, electricity, health services, literacy, child care, personal yet social problems like violence against women, economic infrastructure in the villages, and so on. They seek solutions and evolve strategies. They make mistakes and learn from their mistakes. The processes lead to increasing awareness and public participation.

Components

In June 1992, the Executive Committee of MS, Gujarat consolidated past experiences and directed the Sangha-level process in six broad areas:

Literacy

Literacy is providing women local support to learn to read and write at their time, place and pace besides opportunities to explore their potential and "new learning". MSG has also created linkages with the government's Total Literacy Campaign.

Child Care

MSG reduces the multiple burden of girls and women and releases time for women to pursue education and employment opportunities by establishing child care centres. These are initially voluntarily run by Mahila Sanghas which receive grants from MSG.

Economic development

Here, Mahila Samakhya plays the role of a facilitator and not of implementer. The attempt is to make necessary linkages so that Sangha women can control and access economic opportunities on their own.

Health

In the area of health, women question availability of health services, regularity of visits of nurses and other health functionaries, lack of health education, inadequate health facilities at primary health centres, etc. There have been midwife trainings, health awareness camps, and check-ups in child care centres using linkages with other agencies.

Legal Aid

There have been cases taken up by Sanghas on their own, cases where MSG has tried to link up other agencies, cases where individual women directly resorted to police help. MSG talks to women about the culture of silence and hidden violence within the four walls of their homes.

Mahila Kutir

Mahila Kutir is a very real "space" which provides physical room for women to hold meetings and talk about themselves. The free revenue land for kutir construction is obtained from government. The Sangha women, after much internal and external struggle, concretise their dream of their own space.

Training

Training is a critical input which is viewed as a continuous, participatory, experiential learning process. It imparts new sets of values and attitudes and certain essential skills. The basic philosophy of training is to develop the critical and analytical capabilities of the participants. Training is a 'learning' which may be in any form such as reviews, exposure visits or celebrations.

Structure

At the grass-root level, women's collectives called Mahila Sanghas constitute the basic nuclei of the collective reflection/action envisaged by Mahila Samakhya. The link between village Sanghas and District Implementation Units (DIU) is through the Sahayogini who is an honorary worker for 10 village sanghas.

Sakhis are Sangha women, selected by Sanghas themselves, who undergo extensive training for one year. A new batch of Sakhis is selected once the old group completes the training; the long-term objective being the creation of a group of trained and empowered women at the village level. Sakhis receives stipends.

The State Programme Director's office is at Ahmedabad. District level implementation is done through DIUs. At the State level, the General Council and Executive Committee and at the District level, the District Resource Group provides guidance and support to the programme. The Executive Committee is chaired by the State Education Secretary and it is empowered to take decisions on administrative and financial matters.

Appendix 2

REASONS FOR SCHOOL DROP-OUT (GIRLS)

Reasons for non-schooling	Rural	Tribal	Total
* For taking care of younger siblings	6	6	12
* For helping in household activities	15	16	31
* For going out to earn	9	26	35
* For taking cattle for grazing	8	4	12
* Family did not send them for education	13	7	20
* They were keeping unwell and hence dropped out of school	2	-	2
* Their friends were not going for further education	2	-	2
* Physically handicapped, hence unable to go to school	1	-	1
Total	56	59	115

Appendix 3

CHILD CARE AND WOMEN'S EMPLOYMENT

Category	"Child Care" stated as a constraint		
	Rural	Tribal	Total
Mothers	27	39	66
Caretakers	9	6	15
Fathers	6	3	9
Total	42	48	90

Appendix 4

TRAINING FOR CHILD CARE

A. Contents of the Training Module

Introduction

- Objectives
- Description of the module and guidelines for its use
- Planning training schedules
- Strategies for training : tips for trainers
- Support materials
- Achieving successful motivation in trainees
- Towards effective communication

Training programme for child care : a broad conceptual outline

Orientation to need assessment

- Verifying interests
- Village profile
- Gathering information; what and why
- Interview techniques
- Focus group discussion

Orientation to situational analysis

- Individual discussions
- Assessment of child care needs

Orientation to possible child care models

- Images of child care centre through drawing pictures
- Orientation to available child care models
- Films and discussions
- Talks and discussions about child care experiences
- Visit to a child care centre

Training village level committees for operationalising child care facility

- Finding is needed
- The broken square

- Four corners
- Role play; ideal child care centre
- Roles and responsibilities of committee and Balsakhis

Problems in Management

- Problem/resource analysis
- Discussions on problem issues, examples
- Issue of nasta
- Payment to Balsakhi
- Premises

Orientation to children's developmental needs and process of learning

- Understanding developmental characteristics and needs of children
- Role play
- Discussion of characteristics, needs and modes of stimulation

Khel Khel Me Sikhe (Play as a means of learning)

- Playing selected games and analysing them
- Play with sand, water and clay
- Classification of games and activities into clusters

Orientation to songs, stories and dramatisation

- Animal walk and talk
- Picture conversation
- Other techniques of conversation
- Story telling
- Singing and song pool

Indigenous play materials - preparation and use

- Display of indigenous play materials and their creative use
- Preparation of play materials

Programme planning

- The need for programming
- Planning a programme for children
- Maintaining attendance record

B. Personnel Trained 1991-94

Type of training	DIU	Sahayoginis	Sakhi	Balsakhi	Sangh	Total
A. ORIENTATION TO MS						
1. Sakhis orientation (5 days) Sahayoginis orientation (5 days)	1	33	425	–	–	459
2. Sakhi reflection Sahayogini reflection	–	26	152	–	–	178
3. Evaluation and monitoring documentation and training	1	24	–	–	–	25
4. Preparation for fieldwork	4	9	–	–	–	13
5. Criteria for personnel selection	–	9	–	–	–	9
6. Empowerment training	–	4	–	–	–	4
7. Gender workshop	2	–	–	–	–	2
8. Women's Day Celebrations						4000+ per year
B. HEALTH						
1. Yuvti shibir	–	6	–	–	50	56
2. Health workshop for girls	–	–	–	–	29	29
3. Health issues	–	6	8	–	–	14
4. Dai training	1	1	–	–	7	9
5. Health TOT	–	3	–	–	–	3
C. LITERACY						
1. Sensitisation (cultural programme)	–	–	–	–	683	683
2. Literacy TOT	4	8	–	–	–	12
3. Adult Education	–	5	–	–	–	5
D. NURSERY						
1. Reflection	–	14	Ongoing where activity taken up	–	Ongoing where activity taken up	14
2. Meetings	1	5		–		6

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Type of training	DIU	Sahayoginis	Sakhi	Balsakhi	Sangh	Total
E. LEGAL ISSUES						
1. Legal workshop	—— Break up not available ——					42
F. THEATRE						
1. Poster making, communication and mass media in TLC	1	15	–	–	–	16
G. CHILD CARE						
1. Problem management	–	7	–	44	23	74
2. Developmental care I	–	2	–	51	20	73
3. Conceptualisation	6	8	–	18	23	55
4. Mobilisation on field	–	6	–	10	11	31
5. Balsakhi reflection			–	27	–	27
6. Developmental care II	2	2	–	15	–	19
7. Monitoring	–	13	–	–	–	13
8. Need assessment	2	7	–	–	–	9
9. TOT	2	7	–	–	–	9

* TOT - Training of trainers

* TLC - Total Literacy Camp

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Appendix 5

JOB RESPONSIBILITIES OF SAHAYOGINIS

1. Attending and conducting training sessions
2. Initiation of processes at village
3. Monitoring of programmes and processes at each level
4. Liaisoning work and responsibilities
5. Selection of personnel at grass-root levels
6. Upgrading skills for self-development
7. Reporting and documentation
8. Routine administration such as planning, accounting and financial transactions

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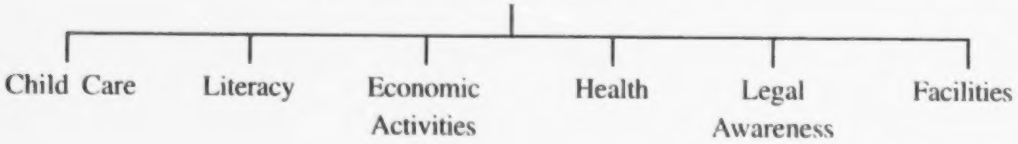
Areas of work of Sahayoginis


Child Care
Literacy
Economic Activities
Health
Legal Awareness
Facilities

Appendix 6

CHANGE IN PROCESSES OF CHILD CARE

Years 1 & 2	Years 3 & 4	Years 5 & 6
1. Child care centres viewed as an activity to be initiated by facilitators	1. Child care situation clearly understood as an emerging need in selected areas.	1. Child care emerging as a demand of the Sanghas.
2. Understanding of links between women's issues and child care rather weak.	2. Emerging understanding of links based on situation analysis and awareness, especially in Sahayoginis.	2. Clear understanding translated to some extent even at grass roots - the Sanghas.
3. Major responsibility of process monitoring with DIUs and Resource Persons.	3. Training for process monitoring and clearer understanding of processes by Sahayoginis.	3. Process monitoring and evaluation beginning to be taken up by Sanghas, committees and Sahayoginis completely.
4. Complete funding for child care provided by MS with DRPs taking major role in decision making.	4. Funding for child care provided by MS but through Sanghas and linked to their learning and level of readiness.	4. Child care centres emerging through community efforts. Some centres operational without financial assistance from MS.

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Years 1 & 2	Years 3 & 4	Years 5 & 6
5. Almost no criteria or only ad hoc criteria for assessing Sangha's readiness for child care activity.	5. Clear criteria for assessing readiness evolved with support of DIU and external resource persons.	5. Clear criteria and indicators for Sangha readiness evolved by participating women.
6. None of the Balsakhis were girls.	6. Efforts made to choose girls as a means for encouraging their potential.	6. More and more girls chosen as Balsakhis.
7. No involvement of men (exclusively women forums).	7. Involvement of men only as sources of information, or in a specific activity (especially husbands of functionaries).	7. Emerging view of child care as a societal issue with strong involvement of men as partners.
8. Sustainability issue not considered.	8. Emergence of issues of sustainability across discussions in various forums and suggestions at DIU and Sahayoginis' levels.	8. Sustainability given much importance, with several ongoing activities.

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The SURAKSHA series documents innovative programmes of Early Childhood Care and Education in India, especially those which address the intersecting needs of women, young children and girls. Carefully researched and written by scholars in the field, each study looks in depth at one programme, highlighting its achievements, philosophy and goals. The series as a whole represents the rich diversity of experience within the country, with a range in terms of geography, auspices and organisational pattern. Scholars and students of Child Development and child welfare would find the series an invaluable source of information, as would policy makers, voluntary agencies and others concerned with programming for women's and children's development.

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WORKING HAND IN HAND

NGO Government Partnership in Child Care

Jyoti Sharma

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SURAKSHA

Early Childhood Care and Education in India
Volume 8

WORKING HAND IN HAND

NGO Government Partnership in Child Care

by

Jyoti Sharma

Monograph Series No. 8
M.S. Swaminathan Research Foundation
Madras

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FOREWORD

Every human being ultimately is the product of interaction between the genotype (inherent genetic make up) and the environment. While heredity determines potential, the home, health and educational environment determine whether young children bloom or remain "blossoms in the dust". There is a well-known saying - *as the twig is bent, so the branch will grow*. It is in this context that Early Childhood Care and Education assume critical significance with reference to giving the child an enabling environment for the full expression of his/her innate potential for physical and mental development.

I am happy that through the SURAKSHA series of publications, a careful chronicling of the many excellent examples of Early Childhood Care and Education in India is being undertaken. This series will enable scholars and researchers as well as policy makers and practitioners to learn from the rich diversity of experience available within our country in this field. Such an understanding is fundamental to learning from successes and thereby helping to replicate effective and economically viable models of day care.

This series has been lovingly put together and is the result of close cooperation among the many people who have worked hard on it. On behalf of the Foundation, I must particularly thank the members of the Advisory Committee, who have given unsparingly of their time and effort, the distinguished scholars who have written the case studies, the agencies whose work has been documented and the Aga Khan Foundation (India) for their support.

M. S. Swaminathan

M.S. Swaminathan

EDITOR'S NOTE

The SURAKSHA series has grown from an idea which has been germinating for a long time. Scholars have long felt the need for documentation of Early Childhood Education Care and Education programmes in India. While there has been a wealth of experience in the country, with many small-scale experiments under the leadership of outstanding thinkers and educational leaders, it has been realised that hardly any of it has been recorded for a wider public.

The vast diversity in the situations of women and children in the country implies that child care services, especially day care, would vary widely in response to local and specific needs. At the same time, programmes for young children, by their very nature must be highly personalised, direct, small in scale, and rooted in local culture and relationships. Diversity and responsiveness to needs are hence an essential characteristic of successful programmes for young children. In the last two decades, with the rapid expansion of child care programmes like the Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) in the State sector, it has become all the more important to draw the attention of policy makers to the importance of the flexibility and responsiveness represented by these multiple approaches. Documentation has thus emerged as an essential tool for advocacy.

It was with the twin objectives of dissemination and advocacy that Project ACCESS embarked in 1993, with the support of the Aga Khan Foundation (India), on the project entitled **Multiple Approaches in ECCE in India**, with a view to bringing out a series of studies documenting innovative approaches to ECCE in India. Dr.T.S.Saraswati, Head, Department of Human Development and Family Studies, M.S. University of Baroda, who has for long been urging the need for such documentation, was an incomparable guide and adviser in launching the project. With the help of an Advisory Committee consisting of distinguished representatives from several disciplines, ranging from Child Development and Education to Management and Women's Studies, criteria were drawn up for

selection of programmes to be included in the series and procedures were developed for a participatory process of documentation.

The series of case-studies represents a wide range of experiences in terms of geography, auspices and structure. The locations range from the Himalayan region to the coastal South, from industrial metropolis to rural or tribal hamlets. The programmes are run by diverse institutions — voluntary agencies, trade unions, educational institutions and women's groups. The programmes include spontaneous private efforts as well as statutory obligations and government / non-government partnerships; they are employer-funded and union-sponsored, school-based or community based. The common element is a commitment to address the intersecting needs of women, young children and girls. In addition, each programme is need-based, client-oriented and responsive, a system of optimal size with a minimum life of three years, caters to lower socio-economic groups and is non-profit making in nature. The series title SURAKSHA was chosen for its rich resonance implying an all-embracing, nurturant care, visually represented in the logo; while the colour of each cover is intended to evoke the specific geographical context.

The process of developing the studies has been a participatory one, involving a researcher/writer working closely with the agency concerned, and providing opportunities for sharing and mutual learning among the agencies through a network and occasional meetings. The studies are process-oriented in nature and not merely descriptive, focussing both on the unique features and the replicable aspects of each programme, finances, sustainability, the child care worker, the organisational structure and relevant linkages. The concluding part in each case dwells on implications of the programme for wider policy initiatives for young children.

This study, the eighth and last in the present series, unfolds the story of how an educational institution with nearly fifty years of experience in a specialised area – ECCE – transformed, by its zest, tireless commitment and specialised knowledge, two contrasting ICDS projects, located in an urban jungle and an isolated tribal community respectively. In spite of the differences in working styles and communications, the partnership seems to be a success story, especially in the voluntary agency's area of expertise, where the resistances could be overcome. But there are uneasy glimpses into the areas of weakness, the inability to inspire the Government medical services to deliver, for instance, where perhaps the structural constraints were too severe.

This leads straight into the deeper question of the nature and depth of the constraints. Can they be overcome by the charisma of individuals, or the well-known and oft emphasised "dedication" of voluntary agencies? How long-lasting are changes dependent on such unique elements? What indeed is uniqueness, and can it be replicated, and if so how? Can the elements of replicability be broken up?

Then again, what are the real financial problems? Is it merely a question of frustrating delays and the ability to handle them? Or are there "hidden" costs which are met by society, or, still worse, by the voluntary agency? If the latter, is it fair to expect a voluntary agency to subsidise the Government? Can this be the basis for a long-lasting and productive relationship?

It is only when these tangled threads are unravelled, that one can begin to discuss the conditions for a wholesome partnership, one that is not only satisfactory to both sides, but leads to genuine growth and development – of the children, the community and the programme. Only in such a partnership can working hand in hand make dreams come true.

November 1995

Mina Swaminathan
Series Editor

WORKING HAND IN HAND
NGO GOVERNMENT PARTNERSHIP IN CHILD CARE

ABOUT THIS VOLUME

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1 THE NEED

Why partnership?

Non-governmental organisations (NGOs) have played a pioneer role in child care services in India. With their unique functional capacity to sensitise the community on the non-material conditions which the people need, these organisations have made significant contributions mainly in the fields of health, education and welfare of children. As the focus shifts from progress in programmes to the development of human beings, the role of these organisations becomes crucial in a pluralistic society to provide opportunities for self-reliance, participation in development, self-determination and security. These organisations act as major channels for influencing public participation in mobilising resources as well as in putting them to use. They bridge the traditional gap between the power of government and the potential of people. Thus the role of NGOs becomes important in motivating community interest in basic services. Since social welfare measures adopted in the past have not been as effective as the situation demanded, the need for an "integrated" rather than an "isolated" approach was felt. The conception of Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) was the first effort in this direction.

Since 1975, the ICDS programme has played a major role in the country towards improving the prospects for the physical, psychological and social growth of its children. ICDS was the first programme to address children's needs holistically. (Appendix 1) From a base of 33 pilot projects in 1975, the programme has expanded rapidly. Despite its undoubted success, it was evident that it did not uniformly live up to expectations because the rapid expansion of ICDS has occasionally overwhelmed the government's ability to manage it effectively. It was further confirmed by some evaluation studies that even though the planning of ICDS was very detailed and elaborate, the impact has not been as much as expected or envisaged. In this context, it was thought that it would be useful to seek support from NGOs to make ICDS a community programme.

Why Bal Niketan Sangh?

Bal Niketan Sangh (BNS) was first conceived in 1944 and was registered in 1947. Since then, it has been functioning as an established education, training and child welfare institute in Madhya Pradesh. BNS owes its existence to its Secretary, Mrs. Shalini Moghe, (fondly referred to as Shalinitai), a dynamic enthusiastic educationist who started the BNS mainly for imparting pre-primary education to children. Her working pattern is influenced by the Montessori method. She developed new approaches for preschool education which are not only cost-effective but also suitable for the holistic development of children. Besides education, she is also interested in the welfare of both women and children. With her single-minded devotion, she is involved in the implementation of the government's programme meant for care and welfare of women and children. Through her incredible enthusiasm and motivation, Shalinitai, accompanied by her husband, puts in her best to extend the activity of BNS, despite many problems and constraints. Several employees who were working through the initial days to establish the organisation said:

> *Shalinitai's charismatic leadership inspires us to do something. Tai's straightforward attitude, team approach, ability to arrive at a consensus through participatory management and above all honesty of purpose is what carries us through in our work.*

At first, the purpose of the organisation was promotion and expansion of early childhood education and child welfare. The organisation was involved in operationalisation of new approaches to early childhood education and development, experimenting and developing innovative and cost-effective methods. But after a long experience of working in the area, it was realised that the development and welfare of women and children were inseparable, and the organisation decided to target its activities towards both woman and child, particularly in the under-privileged section of society. (Appendix 2)

Over the years, the spread of BNS activities covered the areas of education, training and activities of early childhood care and development. A wide variety of experience and skills are available in-house. An attempt has been made to maintain high motivation levels, team sprit and the ability to grow in a supportive and congenial environment. Funds for the organisation's activities are made available from various departments of the State Government and international funding agencies like UNICEF, World Food Programme and UNESCO.

ICDS Projects

Having learnt from numerous experiences and research studies, the government started thinking of handing over some of the ICDS projects to NGOs. As BNS has a glorious tradition of working with women and children and was already running two ICDS training centres, one Anganwadi Workers' Training Centre (AWTC) one Middle-Level Training Centre (MLTC), the Govt. of Madhya Pradesh identified BNS for experimenting with the implementation of ICDS through NGOs. Shalinitai remembers:

> *Sometime in 1986, I got [illegible] phone call from the Deptt. of Women and Child Development, Delhi, to attend an urgent meeting. Many directors, commissioners, secretaries and others were present. I could not understand why they had called me for this meeting, but at the end of the meeting, the Commissioner, Mrs. Mala Shrivastava introduced me to her colleagues and directors.*

They suggested that BNS take two ICDS projects for implementation and offered a proposal of partnership asking BNS to spell out our conditions. I was surprised by that proposal and thought it fit to first discuss it with my staff.

A discussion

A staff meeting was convened and a long discussion was held on the issue. The main questions raised were : What would be the scale of operations? Would there be need for extra inputs and if so, of what kind? How would BNS get them? Which areas should be selected?

In the light of the fact that BNS already had many innovative ideas and plans to make ICDS a community programme, it was decided to accept the offer of partnership. This would certainly help in passing on the full benefits of ICDS to needy women and children and there was also confidence that BNS would do it successfully. Although it was a big responsibility, BNS considered the government's recognition of its capabilities to be valuable. BNS decided to accept the projects on certain conditions:

1. It would select the work area on its own.

2. It would run the ICDS activities on its own

3. Complete freedom should be provided in : a. selection of staff, b. maintenance and supervision of the programme and c. community involvement in selection of the Anganwadi Centre (AWC) location and the Anganwadi Worker (AWW).

4. Training of all workers and supervisors would be imparted by the MLTC and AWTC run by BNS.

5. The emphasis would be on preschool activities.

6. Equipment and learning material would be supplied by BNS to provide an educational environment within the centres.

7. BNS would not be able to bear any financial burden.

Finally, when the BNS staff members were satisfied with the above conditions to be stipulated, the pact was signed. Government offered them two new projects – one in the slum areas of Indore and the other in a tribal block of Jhabua. (Fig.1) BNS decided to start the new project in the Jobat block. Though unfamiliar with the conditions in Jobat, which is a backward block, BNS decided to start the new project there.

It was decided to accept the offer of partnership. This would certainly help in passing on the full benefits of ICDS to needy women and children

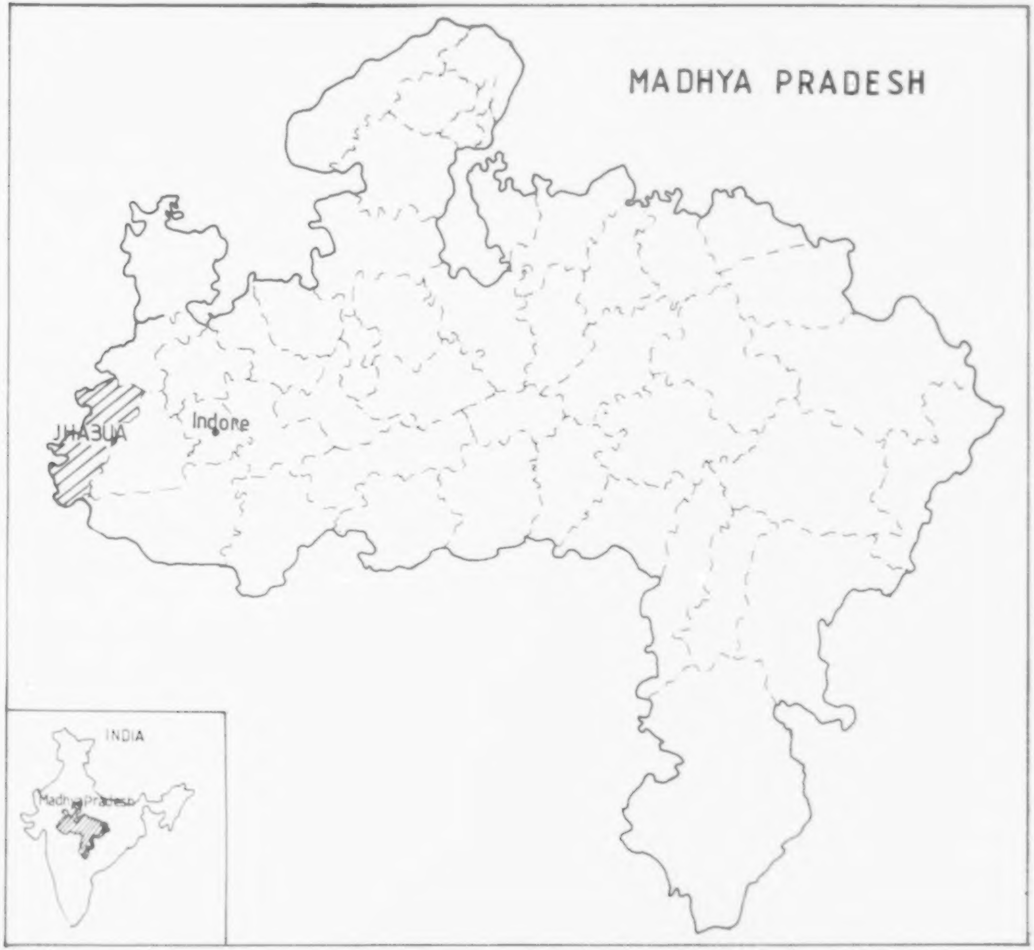
MADHYA PRADESH
JHABUA
Indore
INDIA
Madhya Pradesh

Fig.1 Jhabua District and Indore, Madhya Pradesh (Inset : M.P. State, India)

2 THE BEGINNINGS

How did BNS implement the ICDS project in two areas, with different geographical, socio-economic and cultural conditions? What are the extra inputs the organisation is investing in for the success of the project?

A case study

A case study was undertaken to document the experiences of the two ICDS projects, implemented by BNS. The study focuses on the unique features of the projects and the problems integral to each, and highlights the practical experiences and achievements in the implementation of the country's biggest child development programme in partnership with the Government.

The present study has been conducted on 25 AWCs selected randomly from Indore and Jobat. The selection, which has been done by the lottery method, includes 10 centres in Jobat and 15 in Indore.

Preparations

From early 1988, BNS was hoping to get ICDS, but it materialised only in 1989. After the signing, the State authorities informed the district office about the allotment of ICDS to BNS. The vehicles and other essential equipment were supplied by UNICEF within a month. The recruitment procedure was started for both Jobat and Indore projects, and preparations were on to implement the programme. On Shalini tai's return from Bhopal after concluding the agreement, a team of members left for Jobat to assess the working conditions and select the areas for the implementation of ICDS.

Shalinitai and her husband had discussions with local leaders, Panchayat members and Government officials in Jobat. It was decided that to give information about this programme to the community, a Panch Sarpanch Sammelan was to be organised in the villages. Shalinitai attended these meetings and introduced BNS to the villagers and started making rapport with the community. In the meantime, ICDS functionaries i.e. Child Development Project Officer (CDPO) and four supervisors were appointed. The CDPOs of both projects and two supervisors, one for the urban and one for the tribal project, were selected from among BNS staff.

The urban project functionaries began their work by searching for suitable working areas. The district authorities were thinking of an alternative for those balwadis which were already running under the UNICEF – supported Urban Basic Services (UBS) scheme and availing of the bread supplies from the Special Nutrition Programme (SNP).

Jobat

The BNS team along with the appointed ICDS functionaries visited around 25 to 30 villages; the Panch Sarpanch Sammelan community meetings were organised; a small introduction about BNS, its functioning and the services was given to the community. The most important outcome of these community meetings was that BNS and the ICDS functionaries understood the geographical and socio-economic aspects of the area and the tribal life, which is entirely different from an urban set-up.

In the Bhil and Bhilala tribal groups, the habitation of villages is not concentrated at one place; they are scattered hamlets situated on an undulating tableland of different elevations, broken up by rugged hill ranges. Further, overflowing streams of the hills make these areas inaccessible. Agriculture, which is the main source of livelihood, largely depends upon rainfall. Lack of irrigation facilities as well as access to new technology also contribute to insufficient cultivation of crops. Consequently, to supplement their income, these people usually migrate towards the urban areas of Gujarat and M.P. after the harvesting season in March-April and October - November. Seasonal migration appears to be the biggest hindrance to the implementation of the programme.

Owing to the great distances of the hamlets, mothers want to leave early for the field, which also affects the services. *Bhagoria*, the biggest festival of the Bhil tribals is celebrated in *Phalgun* (Feb-March). During this season, everybody is busy visiting the weekly market, drinking toddy, and dancing. During these days, specially five days before and after Holi, the activities of the AWC in the villages are difficult to carry out.

Despite these conditions, whoever was available in the village, young or old, man or woman, all gathered because they had never seen such enthusiasm in people who came to such remote areas and cared to talk to them. These meetings were useful to convey the message of BNS to the community. News about opening of anganwadis which were going to provide nutrition and health services apart from learning opportunities impressed the mothers and the children. To run the scheme successfully, BNS solicited the cooperation of Panchayat Samitis and primary health centres.

Breaking barriers

When the ICDS functionaries and BNS members interacted with the community, they were perceived as new programme functionaries of the government who would be able to run the programme only for a few days, after which neither would the centre open nor would anybody come. But the supervisors visited the field repeatedly, talked to schoolteachers and to the community. The existing balwadi workers were at first appointed as AWWs; for other centres, the AWW identified

On the way to the AWC

needy women who, in search of employment, directly came to the supervisors. Sometimes this issue was discussed with the community and enthusiastic needy women came forward to do the work. Personal communication was also used and some of the AWW's relatives or friends also came forward on seeing their work.

To render health services, a separate medical staff i.e. a medical officer, two Lady Health Visitors (LHVs) and two Auxiliary Nurse-Midwives (ANMs) were appointed by BNS. Next, the conditions and strategies were planned out.

Working Strategies

- the AWW was to be elected by the village panchayat.
- The location of the centres, both new and existing, was to be finalised in consultation with the community.
- The supplementary food was to be supplied by govt.- usually, Bulgar wheat.
- To emphasise preschool education, a special preschool education kit was to be supplied to every anganwadi at government's expense.

- As 50% of ICDS services are related to primary health care, BNS stressed the need for effective coordination between the CDPO and PHCs.

The urban project

Simultaneously, many activities were carried out to launch the urban project. The existing 23 SNP centres and 21 'bread' centres of UBS were merged with the ICDS, in the areas where BNS decided to open. Analysis of the urban area presented a grim picture; the hostile environment, spread of communicable diseases, specially diarrhoeal disorders, respiratory infections etc. (which are not seasonal but round-the-year phenomena), child labour, high mortality, and severe malnutrition compounded the problems of the poverty-stricken population, preventing them from utilising the existing resources for their betterment.

The approach

- Accommodation for the AWC was to be taken on rent and special care taken to ensure cleanliness and the safety of children.

- Supervision was intended to help the AWW in her activities and not to keep an eye on the AWW

- To control health problems, ICDS and the medical staff of BNS decided to organise joint

Delicious but dangerous

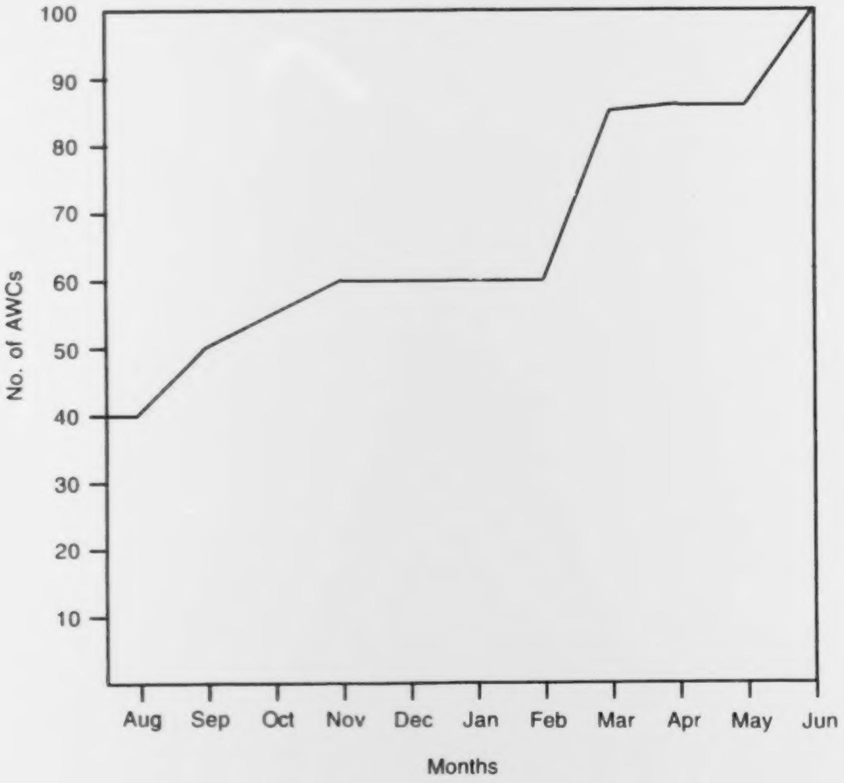

Fig.2 Opening of AWCs, Indore

camps for health check tours, community meetings and to work together to solve the immediate health and nutrition problems and episodes of communicable diseases.

- Emphasis was to be given to preschool activities and innovative methods to be experimented with and learning equipment was supplied.

After finalising the strategies for both projects, centres in both areas was started. Initially in the urban area 40 AWCs were opened which were gradually increased in number every month; by June 90, all centres were set up. (Fig.2) In Jobat 56 AWCs were started initially, and the final figure of 74 was reached in 1992.

3 THE AWW : THE KEY PERSON

AWWs are unquestionably the focal point of the ICDS programme. They are selected from within the community and from an economically needy class. At the AWC level, an additional functionary (helper) is also made available to the workers. This aide is a woman from the local community, who assists the AWW in the activities of the AWC. The AWW and helper are voluntary workers, hence the criteria for their selection is flexible.

Their background

Initially in Jobat project, due to non-availability of educated or qualified women, illiterate women with a supportive family environment were selected, Nevertheless, the impact of educational status on the quality of

Table 1 **Demographic profile of Anganwadi Workers**

		In percentage	
		Jobat	Indore
Age	15-35 years	–	98
	above 35 years	–	2
Marital Status	Married	–	89
	Unmarried	–	7
	Widowed	–	2
	Separated / divorced	–	2
Caste	SC	–	16
	ST	81	–
	Other	19	42
	BC	–	42
Education	Illiterate	16	–
	Middle School	61	–
	Matriculate	23	92
	Above Matriculate	–	8

education has been well acknowledged and with increased emphasis on literacy and education of women, it is now possible to get educated women as AWWs. Thus, 61% of the AWWs in Jobat have education upto middle level and 23% are matriculates. Only 16% have had no access to education. In the urban project, 92% of the AWWs have high school education and the remaining 8% are graduates. (Table 1)

When the programme was started in 1989, the child care workers of the UBS centres joined the ICDS anganwadis. The community members and leaders recommended their names. In Jobat the AWWs were appointed on the recommendation of the village panchayat.

In the beginning, the honorarium of the AWW was only Rs. 250. The experience of working in the AWC helped them in getting better jobs, so the drop-out rate of the AWW was very high in the early years (Fig.3) but increase in the honorarium helped in containing the drop-out rate.

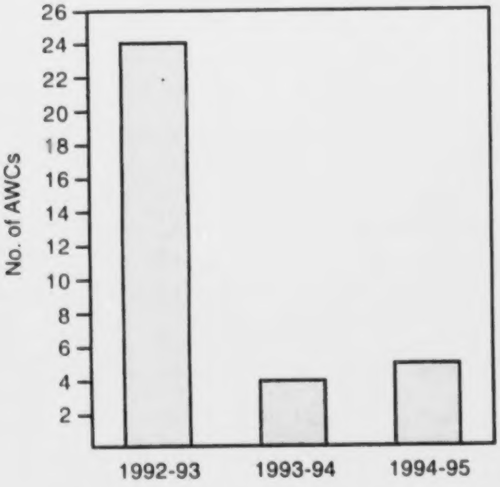

Fig.3 Drop-out of AWWs, Indore

The motivation

Almost all the AWW joined the ICDS due to economic causes. But, though they have not received their honorarium because of delay in sanctioning of grants and have faced many problems and constraints, performing multiple tasks other than routine activities, what really motivates them to do this work is recounted by one of the AWWs. Jayshree said:

I joined this in 1989.........previously I was a teacher in an adult education centre. So I was already familiar with the workplace and have been able to understand the needs of this particular area..........But it was not so easy...........although I already have community support. From the beginning there have been many problems. We do not get our honorarium in time; problems of safe accommodation, political pressure, record keeping, many duties other than routine activities, spread of seasonal communicable diseases have now become routine for us. Despite these problems, we plan new innovative activities at our centre, organise special celebrations and maintain the regularity. How am I able to do this? I think we have 3-4 centres in this area and all the AWWs of this area work in coordination. If we faced any problem or needed help we would get together.......each gave strength to the other to tackle the problem and also to organise activities.........our supervisors provide *us support and guidance to work efficiently; they are constantly in the background....*

Sukma, a AWW from Betwasa village of Jobat project said:

I belong to a tribal community........So I am from the same environment......I am doing this work due to economic causes. Even if a single child is saved from malnutrition or from a communicable disease or if a mother learns about some concept of child rearing, health care and nutrition, it would give me a sense of satisfaction and recognition in the community. This helps my self confidence. I feel I am contributing to a good cause.

What supervisors say

The support, encouragement and guidance provided to the AWW by supervisors and CDPO has been a successful strategy to motivate the workers. But it has not always been working. A supervisor from Jobat said:

When I see positive performance from a worker, I encourage her to do better, but if a worker is not doing anything, how long can I just carry on encouraging her?

Another supervisor from Jobat feels:

Working drive has to come from the concerned person after all. Training, supervision, and everything else is the same for every one. After that it is up to the person.

Competition is also working to motivate the workers, as a supervisor from Indore said:

Every year we organise rallies, melas and many other activities. The best workers receive prizes and are also praised by the officers and visitors. These activities help in the development of a competitive spirit and even those workers whom we perceived as dull and lazy do their best.

The CDPO of Indore feels:

With whatever motives workers joined this project, some of them are doing extremely well and enjoying their work a great deal. The main motivating factor, she feels, is the feedback they get from the community and more important, the confidence they have developed from being a part of the team. What kind of support and guidance is provided by BNS to the workers to keep them working? Shalinitai explained about it:

We tried to impress on our workers, whether she is a CDPO or the AWW, that we are not government functionaries who work merely to achieve targets and fill records. We are voluntary workers who have the responsibility and commitment to provide the best services to needy women and children, without being disenchanted with situational constraints.

Even if a single child is saved from malnutrition or from a communicable disease, it would give me a sense of satisfaction and recognition in the community.

4 A TYPICAL AWC

The AWC is the focal point for delivery of a package of services to the children and mothers. An AWC normally covers a population of 1000 in urban areas.

Accommodation

A suitable place for the AWC is selected by the AWW. As she belongs to the local community, she plays an important role in this regard. Normally it is expected that the local community should provide the accommodation for the AWC – this is the beginning of community participation in the programme. In urban areas, which are already overcrowded, there is difficulty in getting accommodation free of cost. Therefore, one or two centres run in a hired place or in a community hall or in some other place provided by the community.

Special care is taken at the time of selection of a place for the AWC. The place should be clean, safe and such that children and women can come freely and easily to get the benefit of the services regularly. AWWs in the urban areas face many difficulties in getting accommodation. They have to change the place as and when required and services get affected. The AWWs are usually able to get a very small single room which is sometimes not sufficient for carrying out all the activities. While in the Jobat project too the AWC is running in rented places, usually the AWW gets an open place for the AWC and a hut is constructed with the help of community members. (Table 2)

Table 2 **Accomodation in Jobat**

No. of AWCs	41
In schools	20
In panchayat buildings	5
Jawahar Rojgar Yojna	16
Total	82

Accommodation of the AWC is not a very big problem in the tribal area. These AWCs which are constructed under the Jawahar Rojgar Yojna have adequate space for both the display of educational aids and storage of rations, but those AWCs which are run in school buildings face the problem of storage of food though a corner is provided.

Activity space

The AWW can coordinate both indoor and out door activities smoothly as there is no shortage of space in tribal areas. For indoor activities apart from the hired room, the verandah or courtyard is utilised. Urban centres have very small rooms and very little space outside. So a neighbour's verandah or courtyard is also utilised. It was observed during the study that almost all the AWCs have a space problem and that the AWW is not even able to display educational material.

For outdoor activities the AWW takes the children to the nearest park, play ground or any open place that is protected. But in tribal areas, there is no shortage of space for outdoor activities. Many activities like group games, jumping and skipping are smoothly carried out in the open space. Sometimes the open space available around the AWC is also utilised for talks, songs and role play.

Equipment

Equipment for the AWC is supplied by BNS, which receives grants from the government to purchase it. As *dalia* is being distributed as supplementary nutrition in the Jobat project, the cooking and distribution equipment is also supplied to each AWC, while in the urban project since there is no cooking or distribution this need does not arise. In the urban project, when it is not provided for by the ICDS budget, the storage vessel for bread is provided by the community.

Perishable items such as bucket, soap, craft material, crayons and, sketch pens are supplied once a year to each AWC. This equipment is usually purchased by BNS. (Appendix 3)

In the tribal area, the AWW is very worried about the loss of property. The incidence of stealing of equipment, especially the cooking vessels, spoons and plates is high; the displayed teaching aids are also not safe, specially in those AWWs which are running in huts and kuccha houses. So, everyday, they first unpack and display every teaching aid and then start other activities; before closing, they put everything under lock and key. Even during activities they keep a keen eye on children. In urban areas, however, loss of property is usually not reported.

Working hours

The AWW and her helper reach their centre by 8.30 a.m. and make preparations for all their activities. Between 8.30 and 9.00 a.m., they distribute the supplementary food to the mothers and small children. From 9.00 a.m. the daily routine of non-formal education starts, and continues up to 11.30 a.m. After that the AWW distributes the remaining food. She prepares some education materials and then pays home visits to at least three homes every day. She also contacts the Mahila Mandal members, Nigrani Samiti members or conducts sessions on health and nutrition education for mothers.

The daily programme

In the tribal project the activities of the AWCs start at 8.30 a.m. First the AWW sends her helper to each hamlet to collect the children, specially those who are very far away from the AWC. The children from nearby households usually come by themselves. At 9.00 a.m. preschool activities start and continue up to 11.00 a.m. In the meantime, the helper starts the cooking and the supplementary food is ready by 11.00 a.m. The food is distributed to young children and mothers between 11.30 a.m. and 12.00 noon. The children take their supplementary food and go home. After that the AWW pays home visits, contacts the panchayat members, conducts survey work and takes health and nutrition/ education sessions, fills the records etc. She usually works upto 1.00 a.m. in the field. This is the time she starts making rapport with members of the community. She also identifies the malnourished and 'at risk' cases and prepares a list of beneficiaries for therapeutic nutrition, referral cases, immunisation and children for non-formal education.

Periodical activities

Supplementary nutrition, preschool education and health and nutrition education are regular features of the ICDS programme. The AWW with her helper organises these activities, and is busy throughout the day. Some activities undertaken periodically in the AWC are:

- Immunisation
- Health check-up of mothers and children
- Screening of all children for malnutrition
- Monitoring of malnourished children
- Distribution of iron folic acid tablets
- Administration of doses of Vitamin A syrup every six months to children of 1-6 years age.
- Organising meetings of mothers or Mahila Mandals.

> Normally it is expected that the local community should provide the accommodation for the AWC – this is the beginning of community participation in the programme.

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5 THE SERVICES

Supplementary nutrition is one of the most important services provided to children and mothers in ICDS. There is a nutrition gap among the lowest segments of society. The National Nutrition Monitoring Bureau (NNMB) data (1989-90) shows calorie inadequacy of greater proportion in children (60%) than adults (44%)[1]. It is observed that nearly 50% of children have inadequate energy intake[2]. It has been estimated that this nutrition gap is one-third of the daily requirement and ICDS intends to fill this gap, so that children below 6 years, pregnant women and nursing mothers get their total daily food requirement. Supplementary nutrition is expected to provide

- 300 calories and 10-12 gm of protein to children below years.
- 600 calories and 18-20 gm of protein to severely malnourished children.
- 500 calories and 20-25 gm of protein to pregnant women and nursing mothers.

Ready-to-eat food

For the urban project, it was decided to continue the distribution of bread, which was already being distributed to the children through UBS Balwadis. Since the bread was locally produced and supplied fresh, problems related to quality and irregularities in supply could be handled easily. Also cooking, which could be the biggest problem in an urban AWC, was not required. So it was decided to distribute the bread manufactured by M/s. Modern Food Industries Ltd.

The special bread supplied as supplementary nutrition to ICDS is soya-fortified and prepared solely for the AWCs. It is not commercially available. Laboratory testing is periodically carried out to check its quality. The regularity and quality of the distribution is maintained by strict monitoring. The selection of beneficiaries i.e. growth monitoring of the children, receives great emphasis, as it is the key task for identification of the most vulnerable group. Special orientation has been given to the AWWs for growth monitoring and identification of cases of severe malnutrition.

Containers are provided by the community to keep the bread safely. The AWW also requests parents to send cooked vegetables or dal with their children to serve as a side dish for bread. Everyday two or three households by turns send around 250/300 gms vegetable / dal each and totally the quantity becomes 500-600 gm., which is distributed among the children. However, it is not compulsory and only those who can afford may send the vegetable. The variety in the meal creates interest in the children to eat the nutritive meal and the participation of the households reflects a high level of community involvement.

Non-formal preschool education

Non-formal preschool education is an important component of the ICDS programme[3]. Preschool education is provided to children in the age group of 3 to 6 years. As the name suggests, preschool education neither imparts formal education to the child nor is there a uniform method in regard to activities. This education encourages the child and channelises the child's energy in a creative direction. It is a process of education which equips the child to enter primary school. (Appendix 4)

Learning process

Learning in the AWC takes place through :

- Play activities both indoor and outdoor.
- Conversation with children on familiar issues related to their environment and sharing of relevant information.
- Story telling.
- Role play.
- Group songs, poems.
- Field visits.
- Special celebrations.

Emphasis is laid on making use of easily available material for preschool education. In an urban environment, plastic bottles, tooth brushes, broken bangles, empty match boxes and thermocol packaging are collected from the community and used to make teaching aids for the AWC. In the tribal area, dried leaves, twigs and cotton seeds, mud, sand, flowers, stones and feathers are used for making the teaching-learning aids.

These teaching-learning aids help not only in making the AWC interesting and attractive to the children but also makes learning a pleasant experience. In the tribal areas, it is an advantage that natural materials like water, trees, fields and animals can become educational aids. The AWW usually takes examples from the surroundings to impart knowledge to the children.

Usually the budget sanctioned once a year for perishables is utilised to prepare the teaching aids during workshops organised at ICDS office. Waste material is utilised for preparing teaching aids as and when necessary.

Preschool activities have been classified into five sections, namely, activities suitable for:

1. Physical development.
2. Language development.
3. Emotional development.
4. Social development and
5. Cognitive development.

Physical development

a. Gross motor development : Outdoor play activities include walking, running, jumping, hopping and skipping . Many local games like *kabbadi* have been included

Training the fingers

The joy of self-expression

and children enjoy these activities. Normally ball, rope, stones and old tyres are used for the activities.

b. Fine motor development : For fine motor development, indoor activities are included such as sorting out beads, buttons, seeds of different kinds; drawing and painting with fingers, coal or pieces of chalk, on sand floor and mud walls; clay work; making toys from paper or mud and building with blocks. For fine motor activities, the AWW evolve many low-cost methods; for making the blocks, they use waste wood pieces and design them as a house or an AWC. The children are familiar with these activities and also repeat these exercises at home.

Language development

For language development, activities like listening, repeating, and practising conversation are necessary. In Jobat, children who come to the AWC speak the Bhil language. They do not have clear pronunciation and so some special activities are organised for language development. The AWW conducts conversation with the children in groups. She talks to them about different things and this activity serves two purposes; first, it initiates language development and second the AWW educates them on sanitation, hygiene and food habits during this conversation. The AWW asks questions about simple things and encourages the children to speak and share their experiences and ideas with the group.

In the tribal areas, it is an advantage that natural materials like water, trees, fields and animals can become educational aids.

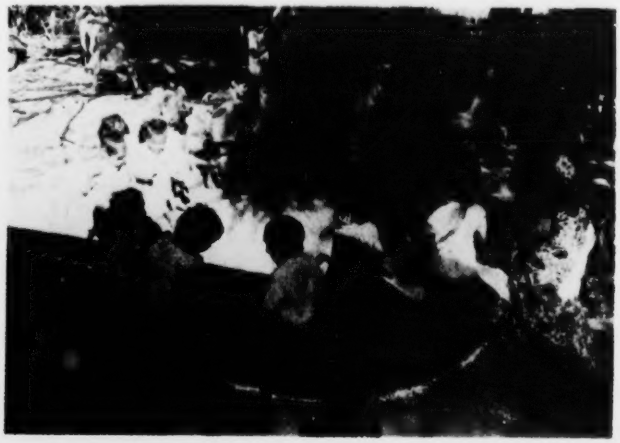
As children love stories, new ideas, feelings, values and experiences are taught to them through stories. The AWW tells simple and short stories about familiar things. To-make story time interesting, the AWW draws pictures and enacts them and sometimes uses puppets and children are encouraged to join in these activities Story telling has become the most enjoyable event in the AWC. Song is another activity for language development, the AWW sings interesting songs to the children, sometimes in their mother tongue. The actions and physical activities accompanying these songs make them enjoyable and interesting. Children are encouraged by the AWW to sing with the group.

Emotional development and creativity

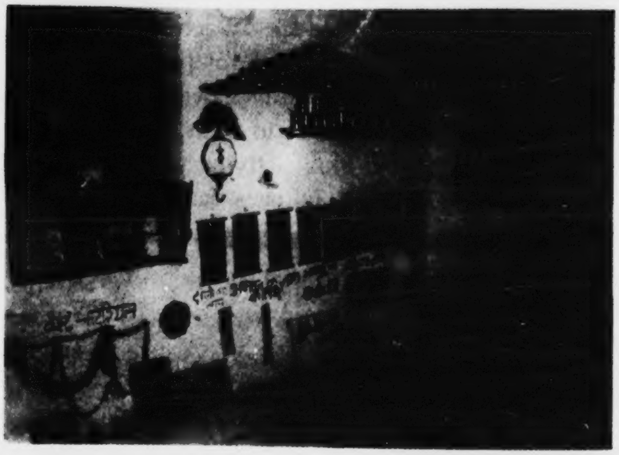
Children can express themselves and their feelings by:

- creating with their hands, as in arts and crafts
- acting with their bodies, as in dramas and dance
- using their voices, as in reciting poems or singing songs.

Therefore, all these activities are organised in the AWC for the emotional and creative development of the child.



Playing by the rules



Tools for thinking

Drawing: Children draw patterns on paper or even on the floor using crayons, pencils, or charcoal. Children also use waste materials like broken bangles, leaves and seeds for decorating the floor with designs. Waste paper, slate, and sand are also used for the drawings.

Painting: Children paint using their fingers or with the help of a thread dipped in color. They also make spray painting with a tooth brush and a net. They even paint on coconut, card board or any other waste material. Coloured powders like *geru*, different coloured inks etc. are used for this purpose.

Clay modelling: Children enjoy making objects of different shapes and sizes with clay; girls usually make kitchen equipment, and dolls, while boys make things like carts and houses.

Tear and paste: Children use cloth, paper and pictures from old magazines for pasting. Sometimes the AWW draws the picture of a bird or an animal on cardboard and children decorate this picture using these materials.

Paper craft: The AWW teaches children in the AWC to make beautiful articles by cutting and folding paper. Using materials like cloth, paper, wood, thread and dried leaves, toys, dolls, masks and garlands are made for the children.

Movement activities: The AWW narrates a story by acting out or by role play. Puppet shows are also given.

Social development

For the development of proper attitudes, behaviour and values, group activities and games are organised through which the child can learn simple rules like cooperating with each other and following instructions from the leader of the group. The AWW also checks the health, hygiene and cleanliness of the children regularly. They are taught to wash their hands before and after each meal and to sit and eat properly.

Cognitive development

Pre-reading, pre-writing and pre-number activities prepare the children for school. These activities include; drawing shapes, learning alphabets and numbers. The AWW also makes some puzzles and other games from locally available material, or uses the educational kit. (Appendix 5)

To strengthen the preschool component in the AWC, the centres are equipped with educational and play material. The operations of preschool education at the AWC are supervised conscientiously. Supportive supervision is provided by supervisors for improvement in performance and sustainability of the quality.

The AWWs join in the activities of the children with enthusiasm. They encourage them to move from group to group and praise them when they respond correctly. They give special attention to dull, weak and irregular children.

Ek pahal : Anganwadi se shala ki ore

The aim of preschool education in ICDS services is to stimulate the development of the children and prepare them for formal education. So the objectives of non-formal preschool are not wholly fulfilled until all the children enrolled in the school complete their primary education.

Initially, there was lack of coordination between the school and the AWC and so the impact of preschool education was not visible. This UNICEF-sponsored programme between school and AWC, was introduced in the urban ICDS, Indore, an effort to bridge the gap between school and AWC.

The programme was initiated with the following objectives :-

- To establish the linkage between the AWC and school
- To create awareness among parents about completion of primary education by their children.

This programme was started in July, '94. A list was prepared by all the AWWs of children who were attending the AWCs and were ready for school. Supervisors contacted all government and private schools and got information about enrolment. Meetings of Mahila Mandals were held and members were requested to help in sending to school those children who had never enrolled, or who had dropped out from the school.

It was decided to organise small rallies to spread the message of the importance of preprimary education. For these, the AWWs with the help of children, prepared small hardboard cut-outs with slogans and some poems about the activities planned for the week. All these activities were organised by the AWW and the helper who assembled all children at the AWC. The message of universalisation of primary education was widely publicised through door-to-door communication. By the end of the programme which went on for a month, 600 children were enrolled in the school through AWCs.

The AWWs who worked hard for the project have been given certificates and prizes at a small concluding function. The local Lions Club presented the school-going children with slate and chalk. The programme was successful in giving proper direction to preschool education at the AWC.

Bal Mela

To bring a change in the routine activities and to provide environmental stimulation to the children, the CDPO and the supervisors thought of organising some activities which were cost-effective and interesting. The *Bal Mela* is organised jointly by groups of five AWCs once in a year.

The planning for the *mela* begins a week earlier. All the AWWs meet and select a suitable place, from a choice of three places suggested by the AWWs, which is convenient and safe. A community garden or playground is usually chosen as the *mela* site. Supervisors guide the AWWs about the arrangements for the activities, based on which the AWWs make the plans. The AWW also contacts the community and seeks their support in organising the activities and in arranging special snacks for the children on *mela* day.

The whole week the AWW is busy in various preparations like planning of special outdoor games, practice of role play, puppet show, collection of play material and collection of raw material for snacks.

On the *mela* day, the AWW and the helper bring all the children to the *mela* site and approximately 100 - 125 children gather. After the prayer, the children split into small groups and perform various activities like painting, clay modelling, group singing, role play, jumping, skipping and many other games. The .children interchange the groups as and when they want. Each group is facilitated by a AWW, who helps the children in performing the activities. The aim that the children should play freely and enjoy all the activities and feel independent., is achieved. The open space gives them a chance to run, sit and play freely which is usually very difficult in AWCs.

As children make new friends, they thoroughly enjoy the activities in the large open space and cheerful atmosphere. Special snacks are arranged for children with the help of the community and distributed at the end. It is the main attraction for all children. Mahila Mandal members provide assistance in organising activities, controlling children and distributing snacks. The effort is totally self-sustaining financially, through the active involvement of community.

Through these special preschool activities, the AWW provides a stimulating environment where children can play, share their experiences and find new friends. The AWW stays with the children full-time and gives them opportunities for play.

6 THE TRAINING PATTERN

The BNS is an established training institute in Madhya Pradesh for ICDS functionaries. Through its three training centres, (Anganwadi Workers' Training Centre (AWTC) and two Middle-Level Training Centres (MLTC), BNS imparts training to AWWs and supervisors. BNS and Government are partners in training of ICDS functionaries, with the financial assistance for the training centre provided by the government, while the training curriculum is developed by the National Institute of Public Cooperation and Child Development (NIPCCD). The coordination of the training programme is the major responsibility of BNS.

Job training

The AWWs and supervisors receive job training and short-term refresher courses at the training centres. The duration of the job training is three months. The training methodology is carefully structured. During job training, trainees are :

– exposed to the organisational and functional structure of ICDS.

– given in-depth knowledge of what ICDS is and who it is for

– exposed to child development and early childhood education, health and nutritional services.

– taught how to tackle problems, shoulder responsibility and evolve some methods of management.

During the training course they observe the daily programme of some centres; discussions are held on the various tasks and methods for improving them. They are exposed to the field, and asked to conduct their routine activities in the field situations independently.

The trainees are deputed by the government. Their knowledge level, interest and motivation are observed in the first few days. The academic background, educational qualification of the trainees usually vary widely. Thus the training methodology has to cater to the need for both theory and practice.

The trainers who are subject experts in child development, nutrition, and social work are appointed by BNS. These trainers have long training experience and some of them have been working for the last 7-8 years in these training centres. Many skilled practitioners in specific fields are invited e.g. immunisation officer, experts in medicine/departments of medical colleges and trainers from other training centres, to guide the trainees in the basic necessities required for the job.

The training of AWWs is a challenge. Apart from being only marginally literate, most of them have never experienced such a prolonged stay in unfamiliar surroundings. So it is not always easy to ensure their attention and interest in training and make it an enriching experience, to prepare them to play a new role easily and effectively and develop positive attitudes towards their work, so that they can translate the training experience in the field and live their changed status.

The training process of the AWW mostly involves oral communication, sometimes in their local language, with the maximum use of audio-visual aids, songs and role play. Maximum emphasis is laid on facilitating the preschool activities like group singing, dancing and play and use of waste material to make recreational objects.

The training unit

The BNS already has a well-established preschool education unit, engaged in providing training to preschool teachers and also in running the preschool activities. The trainers of this training unit have a long experience in preschool activities and they also have experimented with many innovations in this field. Some of them have been working in this field for the last 20-25 years. The MLTC and AWTC benefit from their experiences and invite them from time to time to share their experiences on aspects of preschool components. The teaching and learning material developed by the preschool education unit of BNS largely helps in bringing up the quality of training for preschool education.

During AWW training, special emphasis is laid on the need for supplementary nutrition and to clarify that 'supplementary' does not mean a full meal. Growth monitoring is the other important area which receives special attention, The long and repeated practical sessions stress the importance and need for growth monitoring and use of growth charts for community education. On the question of backlog in training, the trainers said:

> *We try to give the best input from our training centres. Sometimes we take extra training sessions; we have an AWC in our premises; we show them the practical working pattern of ICDS run by BNS, we teach them everything in a practical way and many workers and supervisors who have taken training from our centres are performing very well. However, we have some lacunae in our training which cannot be overcome, due to our limitations; but our training quality does not get seriously affected by these limitations.*

Orientation or induction

The training schedule of all ICDS workers whether implemented by BNS or by government, is decided by the State authorities and so sometimes, many workers are deprived of getting job training for a long time. So BNS has conducted orientation programmes for the new recruits, who have not taken the job training. The training of these candidates is organised at the ICDS office and lasts six days. One or two such programmes are held in a year. Resource persons for the training include ICDS staff and trainers from training centres. (Appendix 6)

The curriculum for the induction programme includes an introduction to the scheme and its rationale, immunisation, nutrition, growth monitoring, preschool education and community participation. Special emphasis is given to develop team sprit among the workers and maintain good interpersonal relationship among themselves. The training helps in encouraging workers to understand the working pattern and also to raise the quality of services. The CDPO feels:

The training of workers is necessary to motivate the workers. If a worker does not know anything, then services suffer. We cannot wait for their turn to receive formal training. So we plan short training courses at our ICDS office; we plan the training course in such a way that no extra expenditure occurs and we use available material for the training and sometimes our colleagues in the training centres also help us.

In-Service training

In-service training is the occasion for workshops that address the problems that occur in the field, and provide knowledge and skills for innovative ideas in programme in the areas of health and nutrition. Preschool education training-cum-workshops are organised on the felt needs of ICDS functionaries and organisation. Sometimes workers also demand training in specific areas. These workshops are usually organised to coincide with sector meetings held in the last week of the month. The unique feature of this training is that workers are ready to adopt new methods and different experiences.

It is not always easy to ensure their attention and interest in training and make it an enriching experience, to prepare them to play a new role easily and effectively and develop positive attitudes towards their work, so that they can translate the training experience in the field and live their changed status.

7 THE STRUCTURE

The heart of the ICDS system is a network of AWCs, literally the courtyard child care centres, each staffed by an AWW. As revealed by the organogram, (Fig.4) the AWWs are supported by a supervisory system that starts with Mukhya Sevikas (Supervisors), each of whom is responsible for monitoring a group of AWCs (20-25 in the urban are and 17-20 in the tribal area). The CDPO occupies the next rung of the organisational structure. She is responsible for securing local facilities, ensuring food supplies, provision of services, and reporting to district and state authorities (i.e. District Women and Child Development Officer and the officers of the State Department of Women and Child Development). At the centre, the Ministry of Human Resource Development exercises overall control through its Department of Women and Child Development.

Indore and Jobat ICDS which are implemented by BNS have some distinct organisational features. The support of health services from PHCs in Jobat has been provided by the government, while BNS is the apex body for coordination of programme at the project level, mainly responsible for administration, financial and human resource management, monitoring and supervision.

Who the supervisors are

For the recruitment of supervisors and the CDPO, preference was given to candidates from BNS, specially the instructors of AWTC and MLTC. The CDPO and two of the four full-time supervisors selected were former employees of the BNS, while the other two supervisors were recruited through an open selection procedure. On the selection of the working team, Shalinitai said:

To achieve our goals, we need an efficient workforce which can translate our dreams into reality, We select our working team from our own institution, as they are already engaged in the training of AWW or supervisors; thus they are familiar with ICDS as well as with BNS. The group of knowledgeable, enthusiastic workers who always come up with good suggestions and demonstrate their initiative, has now become our team of ICDS functionaries.

Nisreen, a supervisor who was taken from the AWTC, tells about their experiences:

In the training centre, we used to demonstrate to the workers how they should perform their task. We had no challenge to prove our capability. But when we joined as supervisors, we got the chance to use our initiative: to try out ideas and innovations to achieve the required quality of services.

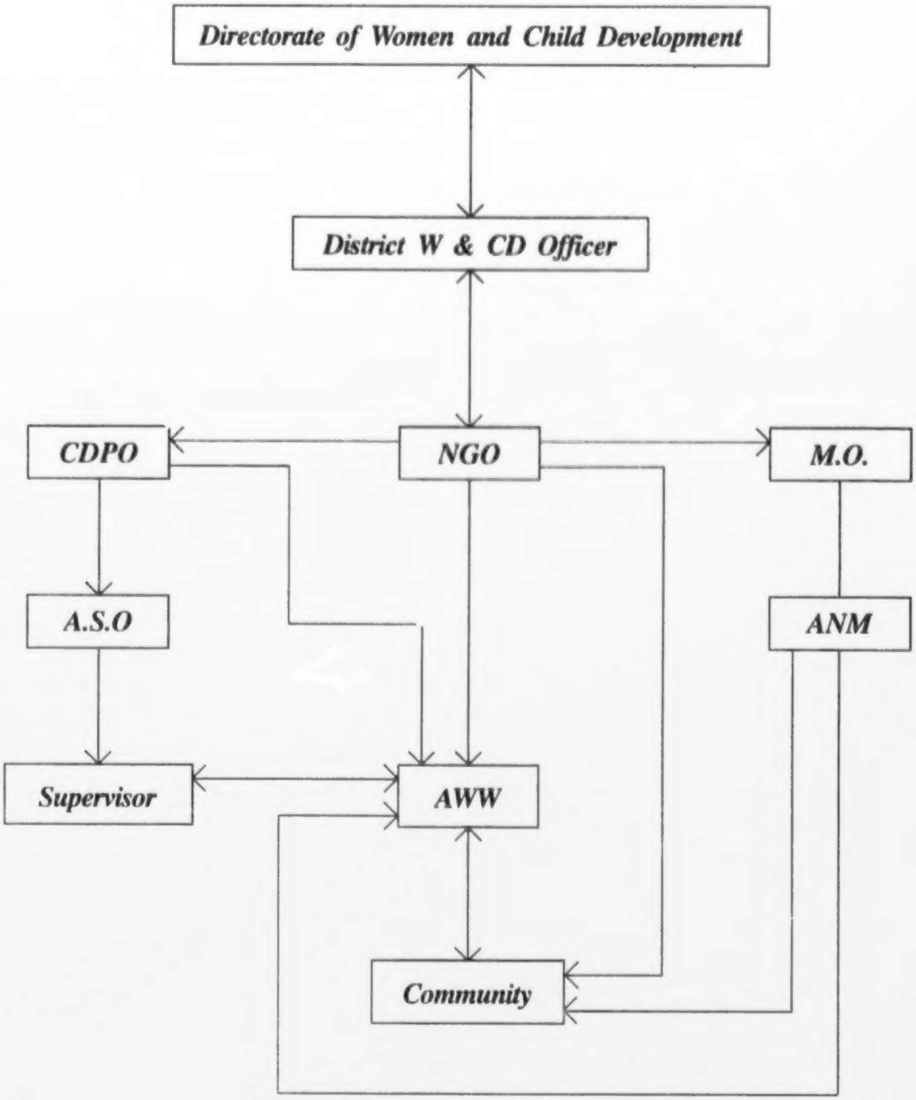

Directorate of Women and Child Development
District W & CD Officer
CDPO
NGO
M.O.
A.S.O
ANM
Supervisor
AWW
Community

Fig.4 Organogram

The AWWs are appointed by the project level selection committee, which includes the CDPO, supervisors and representatives of BNS. The informal approval of the community members is also taken. In Jobat, the AWW is appointed by the village panchayat. In Indore, initially the balwadi workers who had already been working in the field were taken, but now the recruitment is based on various other considerations like academic achievements and previous work experience. After getting approval from the community, they are appointed.

A supportive supervision system is being developed in both projects. To maintain the quality of services, the CDPO acts as leader of the ICDS functionaries, leads and guides the team The supervisors provide the necessary guidance and supervision, while BNS monitors the whole process of implementation.

The role of supervisors

The AWWs are supported by supervisors who oversee the work, record the programme quality, provide guidance and help in the planning of innovative activities. They also liase with the community and help the AWW in getting essential inputs from the community.

In the tribal area, the main challenge before the supervisors was to make ICDS functional in interior villages. Their main job is to proceed smoothly, making sure that maintenance of records by the AWWs in the original is accurate, and to orient and enthuse the AWWs to keep them working. Introducing them to work is a challenge. Apart from being marginally literate and sometimes illiterate, the working pattern of AWC is entirely different from their usual household or agricultural tasks. Under these circumstances, creating an interest towards their work and defining their new work role and changed status, is a very difficult task. How did the supervisors manage these?

In the beginning, everything seemed to be impossible; we were neither able to understand the workers and community nor were they able to perceive our work. Slowly we built a rapport with our workers, tried to understand their problems, learned their language and demonstrated to them repeatedly the various aspects of working. We were then able to build a team of enthusiastic workers. Now we place new recruits alongside an experienced worker, so that they can understand the working pattern perfectly because of familiarity with the AWW. We also provide orientation programme for both the new recruits and the old ones to help them retain their confidence.

Innovating on the job

The situation in the urban area, however, is different, where apart from maintaining the quality of the innovations, they also experiment with new techniques from time to time. They are experts from different disciplines like nutrition, social work and Early Childhood Education (ECE). Working as a team, they plan different innovative activities at their sector, organise small workshops for issues like preparation of educational aids, formulate strategies for dealing with unforeseen problems, apart from planning different activities like nutrition week, celebrations and rallies. The supervisors also plan special orientation programmes for the centres where the quality of services is found to be unsatisfactory. The supportive guidance and supervision provided by supervisors helps in preparing the AWW for the multiple tasks demanded of her.

Boosting morale

The major concern of BNS is to provide quality services. To make the process work, a monitoring and supervision system has been introduced to boost the morale of the workers and ensure an earnestness of purpose. Despite many problems such as inaccessible situations and a long journey, Shalinitai and her husband visit the most remote villages in Jobat, sometimes 20 km away from the block headquarters, and conduct community meetings, check the functioning of centres and get feedback from the villagers. Shalinitai feels:

> *I never have any doubt about either the supervisor's capabilities or the functioning of the centres but to maintain this situation there is need for constant monitoring. When we interact with them, we are able to provide the necessary guidance and support and courage to workers.*

To make the process work, a monitoring and supervision system has been introduced to boost the morale of the workers and ensure an earnestness of purpose.

Sector meetings organised every month at the sector or at the project office provides the worker at the grass-root level with an opportunity to meet others - supervisor and CDPO. Apart from reporting, they also discuss the issues viz.. information on newly developed preschool education, material from local sources and community meetings. Meetings are also organised monthly or fortnightly with Shalinitai, supervisors and CDPO to review and take decisions on matters regarding programme implementation.

Innovative activities are becoming a routine for the workers. These activities have increased the work load of both the supervisors and the AWWs. Continuous monitoring and supervision both by CDPO and BNS keeps the AWWs always attentive and the AWWs feel that these activities help them to remain active in the field, break the boredom of routine and learn new things constantly.

Community participation

The involvement of the community in a programme is indicator of its successful implementation and as the ICDS is functioning in both urban and tribal areas since 1989, the community is now familiar with the objectives and functioning of the AWC. The AWW belongs to the local community, so she understands the existing problems, attitudes and practices. During periodical surveys, she is able to find out all the necessary information about the community.

In an urban area, to seek the participation/ contribution of the community in the activities of the AWC, a Nigarani Samiti has been formed in each of the AWCs. The Samiti has 7-11 members, both male and female. The local leaders, youth and respected people are usually members of the Samiti. Members are elected during a community meeting in the presence of the supervisor.

The Nigrani Samiti members monitor the functions of the AWC, solve the problems of both the community and the AWW, and ensure proper distribution of supplementary nutrition. Samiti members check the AWC every week in rotation. During special celebrations like nutrition week or national days, female members help in organising the activities and male members are responsible for collection of resources. The community contribution is either in the form of money or material The community bears the additional expenditure, which is collected by the Samiti and the AWW gives the list of requirements to the members so that there is accountability for expenditure incurred. The waste materials for activities, snacks, cooked vegetables are also provided by the community.

In the tribal area, however, the situation is very different. The community is not able to provide any resources to the AWC. People are usually very busy in their fields and are not able to participate in the activities. Mainly the Panchayat involves itself in the AWC activities through monitoring and distribution of supplementary nutrition.

The Nigrani Samiti members monitor the functions of the AWC, solve the problems of both the community and the AWW, and ensure proper distribution of supplementary nutrition.

8 THE IMPACT

The average attendance of children in the urban project was observed to be 25-30 children, and in the tribal project, it was observed to be 20-25 children. In the tribal area, the distant location of AWCs, apart from festivals and rituals, were reported as the main reason for the low attendance of children. In urban areas, the spread of communicable diseases like diarrhoea and viral fever affects the attendance of children. (Table 4)

Table 4 **Average monthly attendance of children (3-6 yrs)**

	1989-90		1994-95	
	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls
Jobat	55.12%	50.36%	66.12%	65.15%
Indore	66.12%	65.13%	75.93%	77.74%

Health services

Other than the supplementary nutrition supplied by the ICDS, health services are also provided to women and children. Immunisation, health check-up and referral services. also form an integral part of the ICDS programme For the urban project, a separate health unit is appointed consisting of a Medical Officer, two LHVs and 2 ANMS. The infrastructure facilities especially for immunisation like deep freezers, immunisation kit etc. are available with a separate medical

Table 5 **Agewise cases of Grade III & Grade IV malnutrition**

	Age group (yrs)	1989-90	1994-95
Indore	0-1	8%	3.54%
	1-3	11%	3.57%
	3-6	5%	1.74%
Jobat	0-1	11.12%	6.52%
	1-3	10.3%	6.52%
	3-6	8%	1.54%

staff at the ICDS Office. It is therefore possible to maintain effective coordination among ICDS health functionaries. This helps in reduction of cases of severe malnutrition and improved health records (Table 5). The health services maintain coordination with the district and medical college hospitals. Days are fixed to check the patients referred by the AWW. The AWWs help the health officers in distribution of Oral Rehydration Solution (ORS) packets, chlorine tablets and identification of cases for family planning . They usually complete these activities during home visits. Effective coordination between the health officers and the ICDS appears to be the major factor for its success on all fronts.

While in the Jobat project, the PHC is responsible for health services of ICDS, in the urban area where there are many other health facilities available, establishing favourable contacts and maintaining effective coordination is more important. In a tribal area, where there is no access to health services and people lack knowledge of hygiene and sanitation, the rate of morbidity and mortality is very high; the distance and inaccessible locations make the problem more complicated, Also as there is a lack of coordination between the AWC and PHC, the AWWs face difficulties with the health services. They organise immunisation camps in collaboration with health personnel and refer patients to them, but they are unable to plan any combined activity because of differences in the schedules. Doctors at the PHC are overburdened with many other health programmes and so do not have time to come to the AWC for health checkups or give priority to the patients referred by the AWW. Thus, at Jobat the overall health services in the AWC areas are found to be less satisfactory than in the urban area.

Health of the centres

In order to find out how well the AWCs are actually functioning, a check list has been developed to evaluate the performance of the AWCs (Appendix 7). In Jobat project, four AWCs were found in category A, six in category B and three in category C. (Fig.5)

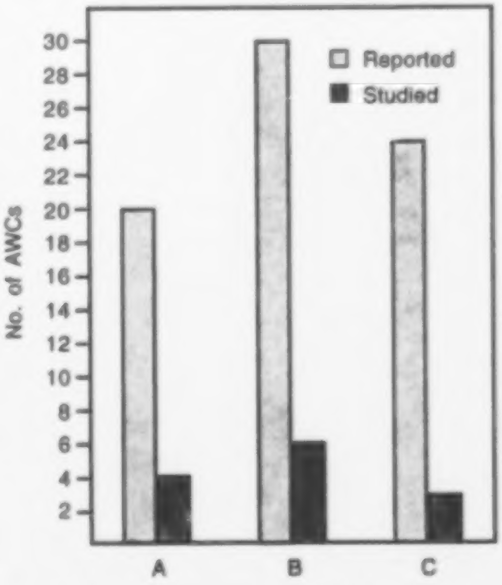


Fig.5 Performance of AWCs, Jobat

In Indore, six centres were found in category A, six in category B and three in category C. As reported by functionaries, thirty centres come under category A, forty-five in category B and twenty-five in category C. (Fig.6)

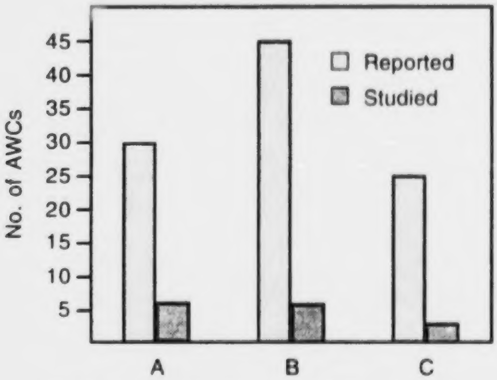


Fig.6 Performance of AWCs, Indore

Community perceptions

The children of the AWC and their mothers, the Mahila Mandal members and local leaders gave their impressions spontaneously. A young boy said:

I like going to the AWC. There are many things we learn.; we get toys, painting and drawing material; songs and drama that our mothers cannot teach us, we learn here.

This AWC provides us with many services. I have been coming to the AWC since I was pregnant. The AWW and the nurse who come to the AWC tell me what do and how to solve common problems. After my delivery, instructions and health facilities were provided to my child. Now I understand some basic things about immunisation, child nutrition and growth monitoring. – a young mother

A mother whose child recently recovered from Grade III malnutrition said:

Previously I did not feel the need for the AWC, so I never went there; but when I delivered my first child, his birth weight was low and he often fell sick. The AWW visited my house and repeatedly requested me to come to the AWC. When my child was six months old, my neighbour said that as my child was very weak and I could not give him any tonic or nourishing food, I should take him to the AWC where I would get bread for my child daily. She added that the doctor who comes to the AWC would do a health checkup and if necessary, refer him to the children's hospital. So I took him to the AWC and the AWW took the weight of my child and showed me the growth curve. We followed every instruction of the AWW and my child got treatment on a priority basis and has recovered from malnutrition.

A community member expressed her views about the AWC and Mahila Mandal:

The AWC is working hard to bring child care facilities to our area. Badi tais *(supervisors and CDPO) also visit once a week to monitor the working, listen to the problems of the AWW and conduct a meeting of mothers in the AWC. Nigrani Samiti monitors the distribution of bread, takes mothers and children to the AWC and helps in planning of the activities. These AWWs do not receive their honorarium for months together, but despite that they work hard for our children here. There are many problems in running the AWC, but this ICDS team is committed to its work.*

There are many problems in running the AWC, but this ICDS team is committed to its work.

9 THE LESSONS

The two ICDS programmes implemented by BNS show that providing high quality services is possible. Proper monitoring and supervision is necessary for success.

Diverse problems

In the tribal area, the project is facing some unique problems. Seasonal migration affects attendance in the AWC and the long distances involved (sometimes more than 3 km), also hinders the utilisation of services as many young children and mothers find it difficult to trek to the AWC. During the rainy season, many of the AWCs in interior areas are cut off from the road making it inaccessible for the supervisors and so monitoring of these centres is affected. About the coverage problem in Jobat, an AWW said:

> *Here in all the hamlets, as the women go to the field very early we are unable to contact them when we make our home visits. We are able to visit only one hamlet in a day because of the long distances involved. It is unthinkable to contact them in the evenings as all of them are busy preparing and drinking toddy, more so in the month of March when they hold their special festival, Bhagoria.*

This problem does not arise in the urban area, but there a tradition has grown of sending children to school after the age of 3 years. Thus parents are not willing to send their children to the AWC for preschool education. Parents need to be convinced about the advantages of non-formal education for young children. As the cognitive functions are not fully developed at the age of three, formal learning may create strain or fear which may make a child drop-out from the process of education even before his/her entry into a primary school. For imparting these messages, special activities have to be organised.

Reporting difficulties

Another problem that ICDS faces in Jobat arises from the heavy reporting requirement. The AWWs are not able to fill the necessary records because of their low educational level. The supervisors guide them to take the survey data and in filling up the forms etc. but they are not able to do it perfectly. Often they take the help of a school teacher or some other person. There is, therefore, no assurance about the reliability and originality of the data. Although supervisors during their monthly meetings and visits to the AWC, always cross check the data, it has not proved very effective in the quality of reporting. In the urban project, the reporting is not a problem. Despite their busy schedule, the AWWs find time for preparation of reports; they usually prepare the reports after finishing the activities. During the AWC hours, records are never written; compilation is usually done at home or in extra time.

Financial problems

Delay in financial grants is another major problem. Sometimes grants are delayed for more than 5 to 6 months at a time and nobody receives either the salaries or the money for expenditure of any kind, like maintenance of vehicle. Sometimes BNS adjusts these emergency needs by diverting funds from other sources; but they do not pay salaries to the staff and so they work without salaries for months together.

The income and expenditure statement of ICDS for the year 1994-95 reveals that the expenditure incurred by BNS was Rs.12,377 and Rs.20,775 for Jobat and Indore respectively, as against the total expenditure of Rs. 10,01,418 and Rs.15,62,842. Again, Rs.92,000 spent by BNS in 1991-92 for some additional expenditures, has not been reimbursed. It is likely that this will remain a net loss for BNS. Besides this, BNS has to advance small amounts from time to time due to delay in release of funds.

Strengthening the preschool

Despite all these problems, BNS strives to make it a successful programme through their innovative and personal inputs. The biggest contribution of BNS is the strengthening of the preschool component[4]. The low-cost teaching aids developed by BNS, the variety of activities, both indoor and outdoor, help to attract children towards the AWCs. The personal visits of Shalinitai to remote areas influence the community; and close monitoring and supervision is the reason for the success of the programme. Ms. Anita Joshi, CDPO, Indore recounted her experience thus:

> *BNS has a long standing in child care and education and we never faced any difficulty during implementation of ICDS on technical aspects. The preschool education units help us a lot in creating a learning environment at the AWC. We have the freedom to work and plan our own working schedule, implement our ideas and innovations and take on-the-spot decisions. Sometimes we face difficulty since the style of functioning of the government is different from that of BNC. It is challenging to retain the confidence of the team in the face of financial irregularities that may arise due to lack of knowledge of proper accounting. Nevertheless the experience is rewarding.*

The present study reflects the possibility of replicating such programmes with a committment to serve the weaker sections of society. The ICDS projects run by BNS will no doubt be a model that will inspire and guide many other organisations.

Appendix I

INTEGRATED CHILD DEVELOPMENT SERVICES

Objectives

(i) To improve the nutritional and health status of children in 0-6 years age group.

(ii) To lay the foundations for proper psychological, physical and social development of the child.

(iii) To reduce the incidence of mortality, morbidity, malnutrition and school dropout.

(iv) To achieve effective formulation of a coordinated policy and its implementation among the various departments to promote child development .

(v) To enhance the capability of the mother to look after the health and nutritional needs of the child through proper nutrition and health education.

Beneficiaries	**Services**
Expectant and nursing mothers	(i) Health check up
	(ii) Immunisation of expectant mothers against tetanus.
	(iii) Referral services.
	(iv) Supplementary nutrition
	(v) Nutrition and health education
Other women 15 - 45 year of age	(i) Nutrition and health education
Children below 3 years of age	(i) Supplementary nutrition
	(ii) Immunisation
	(iii) Health check up
	(iv) Referral services.
4. Children 3 - 6 years of age	(i) Supplementary nutrition
	(ii) Immunisation
	(iii) Health check up
	(iv) Referral services
	(v) Non-formal preschool education

Package of Services

(i) Supplementary nutrition :- Supplementary nutrition is the most important component of the package of services in ICDS and contributes positively towards reducing the incidence of malnutrition in children and improving their health and nutritional status. Given to needy children below six years of age and nursing and expectant mothers from low-income families, supplementary nutrition provides 300 calories and 8-10 gms of protein for children below 6 years and about 500 calories and 20-25 gms of protein for pregnant and nursing mothers.

(ii) Therapeutic nutrition :- Children are identified as severely malnourished when their weight falls below the third curve on the growth chart (Grades III and IV) or when their upper mid-arm circumferences is in the red zone of the tricoloured band. Therapeutic nutrition provides about 600 calories and 18-20 gm protein.

(iii) Immunisation :- To break the vicious cycle of infection and malnutrition and improve the health status of children, immunisation has been envisaged under the scheme against tuberculosis, diptheria. whooping cough, tetanus, measles and polio for all children under 1 year of age and against tetanus for all expectant mothers in the ICDS project area

(iv) Health check-up :- This service includes pre-natal care of expectant mothers, post-natal care of nursing mothers, care of new-born and children under 6 years of age. The service is rendered by ANMs and LHVs under the guidance of PHC, M.O.

(v) Referral services :- The purpose of referral services is to provide appropriate medical care as may be required according to .the seriousness of diseases and necessity of specialised care and treatment. It includes follow-up care of cases that have been given medical attention.

(vi) Nutrition and health education :- This component aims at effective communication of certain basic health and nutrition messages with a view to enhancing the mother's awareness of the child's needs and her capacity to look after these within the family environment.

(vii) Non-formal preschool education :- Non formal preschool education seeks to lay .the foundation for proper physical, psychological, cognitive and social development of the child. Non-formal education is to be imparted to children in the age group of 3 to 5 years at the AWC. The intention is to develop in the child desirable social attitudes, values and behavioural patterns and provide environmental stimulation.

Appendix 2

BAL NIKETAN SANGH

BNS was founded in 1947 with the objective of promoting early childhood education and womens' welfare. Gradually, the activities of women and child development grew in various directions and it became an established training and educational institute of Madhya Pradesh. The first unit of the Bal Niketan Sangh is a Higher Secondary School which is running in the main campus at Indore.

BNS has a well established preschool education unit where preschool education is given to the children through the Montessori method. This section also gives training to nursery school teachers, experiments with innovative ideas and develops low-cost material for preschool education. BNS also coordinates 20 day care centres with assistance from the Central Social Welfare Board and also imparts training for child care workers. Balwadis in slums are also run by BNS.

In 1984, the Anganwadi Workers' Training Centre was established, which imparts training to AWW who are deputed by the State government. In 1986, the Middle Level Training Centre was started which provides training to ICDS supervisors. In 1993, another Middle Level Training Centre was started specially for World Bank – assisted ICDS Projects.

In 1989, Jawahar Bal Vikas Kendra in Jobat was started, with a boarding school for tribal girls. 50 girls from the age of 6 to 7 years onwards are admitted. The teaching is done by the BNS staff. There is a school up to middle level and a boarding house. The main emphasis is to make the girls self-sufficient. Activities are carried out to enrich the environment favourably for holistic development. A vocational training center for tribal women has also been established in Jobat which gives vocational training with emphasis on promotion of women's entrepreneurship.

Vatsalyadham, an orphanage, is also run by the BNS.

BNS Products, a workshop for manufacturing preschool education kit is running with assistance from the Central Social Welfare Board. These kits are supplied on order to other ICDS projects of M.P.

Appendix 3

EQUIPMENT FOR AWC

For general use

- Small mats or durries.
- One cupboard (for storage).
- Low wooden chowki or low table.
- First - aid box.
- One vessel with lid for drinking water.

For supplementary food, health, hygiene and immunisation

- One vessel for storage of supplementary food
- Tumblers, plates, spoons.
- One or two buckets.
- Mugs.. soaps, disinfectant fluid.
- Records Register.
- Immunisation Registers.
- Growth Charts.
- Referral Slips.
- Weighing scale.

For preschool education

- Building blocks, shape blocks, different coloured matching blocks.
- Counting frames.
- Different play materials made with locally available low-cost material.
- Drawing and craft materials.

For health and nutrition education

- Posters on health and nutritional problems of both mothers and children.
- Flip books, posters, charts, and other audio-visual material.
- Live demonstrations for prevention and treatment of common childhood ailments.

Appendix 4

PRESCHOOL EDUCATION IN ICDS

Preschool education in the AWC aims at total development of children. The objectives are -

- To develop in the child good physique, muscular coordination and motor skills.
- To develop creativity and imagination, initiative and curiosity.
- To control the child's natural aggression and destructive tendencies and to channelise spontaneous energies to good behaviour and work, and inculcate human values like concern for others, sharing, cooperation, patience, tolerance, fairness, truthfulness, integrity, modesty, courage and equanimity.
- To develop the attitudes of social responsibility and desirable relationships, to help the child to live with other children and to respect the rights of others.
- To encourage the child to learn to work and play independently and to be able to accept help and guidance from adults.
- To develop good habits of health and hygiene.

Appendix 5

THE EDUCATIONAL KIT

The basic material for preschool education is designed and developed by BNS. This kit includes some permanent and some perishable materials for education. These educational aids are designed to provide stimulation for the development of children. The kit is provided to each AWC at a cost of Rs. 500/- sanctioned by the ICDS The kit includes :-

- Colour strips
- Correlation cards
- Dominoes
- Animal set
- Rod puppets
- Missing games
- Sequential thinking cards.
- Roller chart for vocabulary
- Number trolley
- Wheel toys
- Puzzles
- Sewing board
- Gradation cards
- Animal masks
- Geometrical figures
- Floor mosaic

Appendix 6

ORIENTATION PROGRAMME FOR AWWs

Objectives :

- To provide orientation about responsibilities of AWW.
- To give introduction about services of ICDS.
- To provide orientation about working as a team and involving the community in the programme.

Venue : ICDS office, Indore

Participants : 10 to 15 AWW who have recently joined service or those workers who are not performing well.

Trainers : Medical Officer, CDPO, Supervisors

Duration : 6 days

Programme :

Day 1	Introduction about ICDS, responsibilities of AWW services and family survey
Day 2	Immunisation, knowledge about health check-up and referral services, role of AWW in health services, coordination with ANM.
Day 3	Growth monitoring, plotting of growth curves, identification of beneficiaries.
Day 4	Education of community and communication with mothers during meetings and home visits, liaison with local leaders to seek their participation in AWC, behaviour, attitudes and communication.
Day 5	Early childhood education in AWC, methods, approaches and schedule of activities, preparation of teaching and learning material from waste and other low-cost resources available.
Day 6	Reporting, team working, organising various innovative activities, mode of seeking community participation, taking the help of other AWWs. key points to remember while running the AWC.

Appendix 7

EVALUATION CRITERIA FOR AWCs

Category A	**Urban**	**Tribal**
Infrastructure	– cleanliness, display of educational aids, pleasant environment – – safe location –	
Attendance	– at least 80%	– at least 70%
Children at AWC	– at least 80% performing preschool activities	– at least 70% performing preschool activities
	– take supplementary food properly – – follow instructions of AWW – – maintain group morality during indoor and outdoor activities –	
	——	– children talk freely to visitors
Utilisation of services	– at least 90% of eligible children and mothers	– at least 70% of eligible children and mothers
Community Participation	– monitoring by community forum – financial support	– monitoring by panchayat ——
	– solving problems –	
	– material contribution	– other contributions
Anganwadi Worker	– regular sessions of education on health and nutrition – – organise all activities efficiently – – provide/design new activities for children – – develop new teaching aids with the available resources –	
	—— ——	– make constant efforts to extend services – coordinate with health functionaries
	– facilitate group activities – – maintain good inter-personal relationship with supervisor and community – – proper maintenance of records – – arrange special programmes on national festivals –	

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Category B	Urban	Tribal
Anganwadi	– clean, attractively decorated with educational aids, even if location not favourable – educational environment	– clean, some educational aids displayed – educational environment, to some extent
Attendance	– at least 60% present on an average	– at least 40%-50% present on an average
Children at AWC	– at least 65% performing preschool activities	– at least 50% performing preschool activities
	– taking supplementary food properly –	
	– 65% follow the instructions of the AWW —	– 40% follow the instructions of the AWW – 40% children understand Hindi
Utilisation of services	– at least 75% eligible women and children taking benefits of all services –	
Anganwadi workers	– lack of initiative in the AWC activities – – proper maintenance of records –	
	– few innovative activities —	– regular activities but no coordination with health functionaries – one or two national day celebrations
Community participation	– No monitoring but some contributions	– No monitoring or contributions

Category C

Those AWC which fall even below Category B.

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